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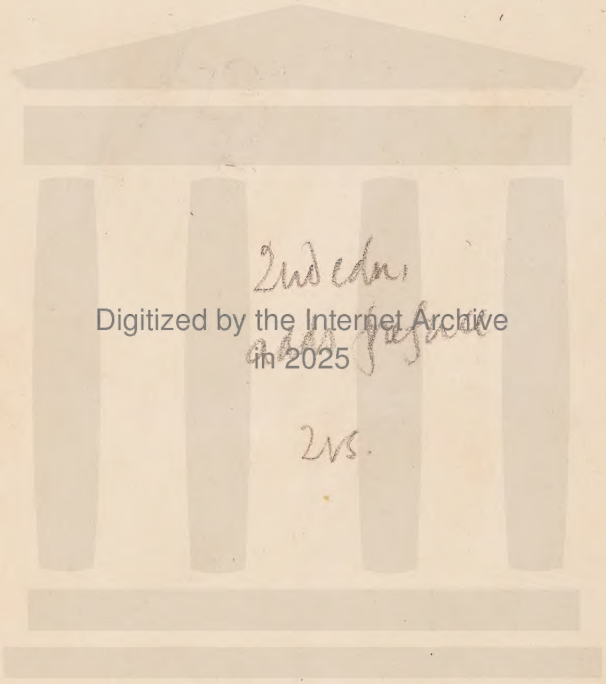

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R. N. Gray.

OAKFIELD;

OR,

FELLOWSHIP IN THE EAST.

BY

W. D. ARNOLD,
LIEUT. FIFTY-EIGHTH REGIMENT B. N. I.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1854.

LONDON:
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.

TO

A. P. AND A. B. J.

My Dear Friends,

You will be surprised to see *Oakfield* appear at last; under different circumstances indeed, and in a somewhat different form from that which we first intended, but still, with some few alterations, the same as you remember it. I say which *we* intended, for I cannot forget the share which you have all along had in its composition and subsequent adventures; nor can I forbear to thank you, though unable at present to do so by name, lest I should compromise you as well as myself, for the kind sympathy and friendly (I fear too friendly) criticism with which you have throughout assisted and encouraged me.

Reading over these pages at a considerable interval after they were written, I become painfully conscious of the numerous faults and still more numerous defi-

ciencies existing in them. By faults, I mean positive mistakes, which, however clearly seen, I could not alter without re-writing the whole; by deficiencies, shortcomings as to the idea which I proposed to myself. It became a question, therefore (I being unwilling, as who is not? to undertake the grievous and most irksome labour of re-writing), whether the book should be published as it was, or not at all, and I am willing to derive all the excuse I can from the partiality of kind counsellors, for having chosen the former alternative. Still the responsibility must of course ultimately rest with me, as upon me the painful consequences of failure, of a disapproving, or, what is harder still, they say, for a young author to bear, a contemptuous indifferent reception, must descend. Should this be so, however, I shall still have had my reward. This I can truly say: that no mortification will ever make the thought and recollection of *Oakfield* distasteful to me, associated as it is with you two, and so many of my pleasantest hours spent in your society in India.

I need not tell you, but it may be necessary through you to assure the reader, that there is nothing throughout the book intended for a personal allusion. Cade and Stafford have no more actual existence than the 81st and 90th regiments of Native Infantry:

nothing could have been more unjustifiable, nothing certainly was farther from my thoughts and intentions, than to write at any corps or individual under a fictitious name. A class of men of whom Cade is a fair type, phases of an Anglo-Indian society like the 81st regiment, I have certainly seen too frequently; but nobody is *meant* by the one, no corps hinted at in the other.

The description of Indian every-day life may not be very inviting, but I think the Indian reader will allow it to be, and the English reader on his testimony receive it as being, tolerably correct.

India is more talked of in England just now than it has been, I suppose, since the days of Warren Hastings. The Manchester folks want cotton; and when cotton is wanted, England is ready to begin and consider its duty to India. A result to be welcomed thankfully, however attained; nor need we sneer at the means, we who have seen in so wonderful a manner how by these material wants and instincts, by cotton-fields here and gold-diggings there, the populations of the globe are healthfully interchanged; we, I say, shall do ill to sneer at means by which we have thus seen that God does govern the world.

But whatever the people of England may talk, or think, or do about India, whether they get their

cotton from it or not, I know that all will still depend upon the Englishmen who are in India; and the most sanguine and the most conservative will hardly deny that reform is wanted *there*. They speak ignorantly who speak in sweeping disparagement of the two services; there is much of gallantry and patient endurance in the one, much intelligence and laborious energy in the other of them. But it cannot be denied that there is a want of earnestness, a want of moral tone, and, together with much superficial scepticism that would pass for freedom of thought, a want of liberality, greater than exists in corresponding classes of society at home. If this were not so, the greater part of *Oakfield* would be false; it is because I believe it on the whole to be true, that I have, after all, determined to publish it.

Wishing that I may be as kindly understood by the reader as I have been, and I know always shall be, by you,

I remain,

Affectionately yours,

PUNJABEE.

August, 1853.

PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

Since the first publication of this book, it has been my fortune to see and hear several criticisms of it, both of praise and blame. There is one of these which I feel bound to notice. It has been asserted, I must say to my no small surprise, that *Oakfield* is an attack upon that distinguished service to which I have the honour to belong; and furthermore, I have heard it said, that such an attack, if made at all, should not be anonymous. This is something more than a criticism; it is an accusation; and, as such, I am glad to have this opportunity of answering it.

In the first place, whatever sting there may have been in the word "anonymous," is drawn by the title-page of the present edition. I did not think it neces-

sary to publish my name in the first instance, partly because, in the case of a work professing to be a novel, it seemed superfluous to do so; but still more because I did not wish that a name, for the sake of which I have so frequently met with kindness, should be in any degree compromised by any performance of mine. But when once the charge "anonymous attack" has been so much as hinted at, this consideration must give place to the yet higher one of self-respect. This attack, then, if such it be, is, at any rate, no longer anonymous; but I deny that it is an attack at all, at least upon the Bengal army. I deny that the Cades and Staffords represent that army, as confidently as I affirm that they form therein a distinct, a disgraceful, though, I trust, a diminishing class. It is a libel upon the profession to say that a man who tries to expose its black sheep is, therefore, the accuser of the whole service. I repeat what I said before,—that I have not consciously alluded to any particular individual, or any particular regiment; but I know that every officer in the Bengal army who reads *Oakfield* will feel that he recognises the class of character there delineated; and I believe also that a great many will feel, that to say or write, or do anything which may help to display such characters in their true colours, is to be not the calumniator, but

the sincere friend, of the army. Nor can it be considered presumption for any man to lend a hand to such a task. It is no very presumptuous flight into the region of high morality to express contempt for those gross and flagrant forms of stupid vice which have been utterly expelled from the society of English gentlemen at home, but which still linger, though I believe rapidly on the decline, in corresponding circles in India.

I have been told, however, that this class is the exception, not the rule. I know it: my business lay with the exception. It surely is superfluous to say that the class alluded to is absolutely distinct from that high and honourable body of Indian officers who have so justly won for the Indian army its great reputation. These will understand me when I say, that whatever accusation may be contained in *Oakfield*, is directed not against our service, but against that wretched class of men who are its disgrace, and our common enemies; who regard our noble profession not as furnishing a pledge and security for the honour of its members, but rather as affording a justification and excuse for license; who denounce uprightness as folly, gentlemanly principle as cant, and common decency as methodism.

Believing that such men exist in our ranks, and

that with regard to them I have said nothing more than every honest man in the army will approve, I have no wish to conceal my name, conscious as I am that I could return to India to-morrow and look my friends and brother officers in the face, and feel that I had in no way injured, but rather done them service.

Fox How, Ambleside,
May, 1854.

" Tell me not in mournful numbers
" Life is but an empty dream !
" For the soul is dead that slumbers,
" And things are not what they seem.

" Life is real ! Life is earnest !
" And the grave is not its goal ;
" Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
" Was not spoken of the soul.

" Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
" Is our destined end or way ;
" But to act that each to-morrow
" Finds us farther than to-day."

LONGFELLOW.

OAKFIELD,

OR

FELLOWSHIP IN THE EAST.

CHAPTER I.

. . . . . τίνας
χώρους ἀφίγμεθ' ἢ τίνων ἀνδρῶν πόλίν;
Soph. Œd. Col. 1. 2.

"So this is India!" exclaimed Oakfield, as the steamer glided round the point, disclosing all the wonders of Garden Reach and the City of Palaces. "This is certainly beautiful. I accept the omen. May all my hopes of India be as well satisfied as they are by the first view of its externals!"

"Amen," said Stanton, more sadly than hopefully. He had himself been in India ten years of his life; and knowing how sadly flattering a specimen of its scenery Garden Reach was, thought sorrowfully of the dash which all his friend's hopes would soon have to endure.

"Stanton, you are intolerable; you never tell me that I am a fool in my anticipations, but you imply as much fifty times a day."

"Not that you are a fool," said Stanton; "but I hardly know what your anticipations are. You hope to like India of course? You would not have left Oxford if you had not expected to be happier elsewhere?"

"Happier! No, you are wrong there. Whatever motive I may have had for coming out, I never expected to be *happier* in any place in the world than at Oxford."

"Why leave it then?"

"Because I had a vague feeling that I was going to the devil there."

"Is the devil, think you, farther off in India?"

"I hope so," said Oakfield, seriously.

"Well, old fellow, you know best why you came out. I tell you candidly I can't comprehend it. I can understand a boy of sixteen being glad to get away from school, and rush to the gorgeous East to wear a red coat; but why you, at one and twenty, should have voluntarily abandoned a respectable university career to come to this wretched country, I cannot conceive."

"In the first place, in spite of your experience, I am disposed to hope that it is *not* a wretched country."

"Well; heaven forbid I should endeavour to make you think so: you will soon judge for yourself;—here we are."

"Here we are! How strange! as if we had come to the end of a long walk, not from England to India." Meanwhile the steamer had come to anchor, and in a few minutes Oakfield and Stanton were on their way to Spence's Hotel, in palkis. Edward Oakfield had always looked forward to taking orders, had kept his terms at Christ Church and taken his degree, when he suddenly grew restless, urged his friends to get him an Indian appointment, and came out as a cadet. Stanton was a friend of six weeks' standing, an artillery officer, returning from furlough. On the voyage he and Oakfield had become intimate, and although the one was a griff and the other a comparative veteran, according to Anglo-Indian estimation, yet they themselves, looking upon things through other than Anglo-Indian media, found little difference of importance between twenty-one and thirty. Stanton himself *liked* India about as much as most people who have been ten years in the country do like it; he was now returning to what his unpersuadable friends at home would call his magnificent service, his life of oriental luxury, &c.; what he knew well enough to be an existence of uncomfortable banishment. He was not un-

happy about it; he had got too much to regard it as a stern matter-of-course necessity; but still less was he happy, or in the least degree agreeably excited at finding himself again in India. He felt, perhaps, a gloomy sort of satisfaction in returning to his duty, and in the very consciousness of his dislike for it found comfort. But far more than for himself he felt for his friend. He did not know, indeed, the exact cause of his having left Oxford, but he knew that he came to India in hope, and could not but fear that he would soon meet disappointment. Oakfield himself was neither happy nor unhappy, but anxious. India had come so little into his thoughts all his life time, he having never had a friend in the country, that he had no very decided expectations of any sort to be gratified or disappointed at first glance; he was going to make an experiment, and felt that it had not yet commenced. As for his profession, that also was a *terra incognita* to him, of which he had not even a foreshadowing. He had seen nothing of soldiers in England, having had the good fortune never to live in a garrison town; brought up at a public school and at Oxford, with the prospect of taking orders, he was not fool enough to fancy himself now inspired with an irrepressible military ardour; and as for the red coat illusion, which does undoubtedly decoy many poor

lads to India, why he was past one and twenty; and though that is certainly no very venerable age, yet is the difference between it and sixteen infinite. Edward Oakfield was not a boy, but a man. He got into his palki then, when the mystery of that process had been expounded to him, with an anxious mind; yet, on the whole, as he jogged along, harassed by his fears that he was tiring the poor bearers, and looked over the green esplanade to the line of palaces of which Government House forms the centre; looked at the river and shipping; felt that pleasant excitement which all but idiots do feel at the consciousness of being in a new and strange country; the sight of Asiatic trees, the hum of Asiatic tongues cheered him; the feeling of hope, which he had expressed on board the steamer, revived; hope founded not upon any grounds of reason or experience, but, as our hopes often are, on a soothing sense of present enjoyment. Meanwhile it were false to say that he did not think of his dinner; it was six o'clock, and they had breakfasted at eight on board the Precursor; moreover, he looked forward to a pleasant little dinner with Stanton at the Calcutta "Long's." In this, however, he was destined to meet his first Indian disappointment, for he found that "Spence's," however amiable an establishment, was as unlike "Long's" as Mount Vesuvius in its internal econo-

my; and the *recherché* little dinner which he had promised himself, alone with his friend, was ill replaced by the promiscuous table d'hôte, at which he shortly sat down for the first time in an Indian white-jacketed society. There was a good deal of conversation during dinner. Stanton had met some old acquaintance; Oakfield sat and listened.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Stanton, when dinner was over and cheroots were lighted.

"Oh, I don't know that there's much to think; of course all those white-robed fellows behind the chairs look odd to me, and so do those things up there."

"What, the punkahs? They will have an effect upon you that you don't suspect, if you sit here long."

"What is that?"

"Send you to sleep. Well, but what did you think of the party as a random specimen of Calcutta society?"

"Really I can't tell, for I was not in a listening, still less in a criticising mood. I couldn't understand a good deal of what seemed to be Calcutta 'shop.' People seemed to talk freely enough. I suppose it was as social an affair as a table d'hôte dinner at an English inn would be; but, my dear fellow, let us move, for I feel your punkah prophecy coming true already."

They went out and walked down the court to the room which they shared. Here they resumed their conversation.

"Does it seem strange to you, Oakfield, to find yourself in India?"

"No; I do not think it does; but the fact is, I dwell less upon the thought of India and my being in India than you perhaps imagine. I feel oppressed, certainly; but more with a sense of doubt than anything else."

"Doubt, as to what?" asked Stanton; "as to the propriety of your choice in coming out here?"

"No," said the other decidedly, "not about that; the only point on which I feel clear is that I did right in leaving Oxford, dearly as I loved it; but I am full of doubt as to what is to come next. My whole resolution about India was so sudden, and so negative; to get rid of the present was so much more my object than to arrange a future, that now I find myself actually started on a new reach of life with not even a shadow of an impression, I do not say as to its pains and pleasures, but its dangers and duties."

"They will open themselves to you," said Stanton.

"Will they indeed? Did they so to you?"

Stanton looked embarrassed; presently he added, "You never told me yet why you left Oxford."

"No,—I will some day."

"Some day!—there is your reserve."

"My dear old boy, you reproach me with that reserve, more than you of all people in the world should do; for if there is a reserved man on earth I should say it was Hugh Stanton; but in this case I only postpone telling you because we all postpone what is difficult, and I should really find it hard to tell you, or myself either, exactly, *why* I came out here; but besides this, if the charge were true, and if you had a right to make it, I am not disposed to give up reserve as a fair matter of reproach; or if it is, which of us may cast a stone? Which of us is,—nay, to be candid, which of us would wish to be without reserve? Are not you and I both equally reserved at this present time? I am much mistaken if, beneath our conversation on comparatively light things, there is not reserved a common religious feeling which will not show itself in more than a certain gravity,—almost sadness."

"Humph!" said Stanton, "I don't know, I'm sure: do you mean to speak of this religious feeling as always present, hidden under this or that superficiality?"

"To a certain extent I do; I believe we are all, I believe certainly that you and I are, in our ordinary tone of mind, more religious than we

allow ourselves to seem to be; but I did mean, particularly at this present time, that when speaking of duties and dangers,—the life past and the life future,—there is vibrating in both our hearts a deeper chord which neither of us dare touch upon. Is it not so?"

"I will not deny it of this present time, most assuredly," said Stanton, more affectionately than was his wont, he being rather a cold-mannered man; "but yet I can hardly believe that our ordinary life, much as it does conceal, conceals much religion. I for one dare not think so highly of myself."

"So highly!" cried Oakfield. "Say rather so lowly. It is not to our credit that the feeling is there, but to our shame and peril that we smother it."

"What do you mean then by religious feeling?"

"Any feeling that is of faith and not of sight," said Oakfield; "don't think I am going, Oxford fashion, to tie you down to a creed; still less that I wish to look at the comparative merits of Brahminism and Christianity as an open question; but, still I do think that all those feelings which draw us away from yesterday, and to-day, and to-morrow are better worth cherishing than the wretched shams with which we cloak them. This is the reserve which is to be condemned: and of this we

are all guilty ; even you and I in our private conversation, — still more in the world, where, indeed, we give way to it altogether. What is often called and condemned as reserve, is really either a constitutional shyness, which, as an unavoidable misfortune, is no fair matter of reproach, or a very proper reluctance to be Jack and Tom with every fool you meet. Certainly the first had nothing to do with my hanging back about Oxford, and I don't think I need tell you that it was not the last."

"Well," said Stanton, "I will remember your promise, and hear of your Oxford career some day; meanwhile, I must go to bed, as I have to go out to Dum Dum early to-morrow. I shall be back here the day after, and shall, I suppose, find you in the fort. I leave you to the musquitoes. Good night."

"Good night, old fellow ; God bless you."

CHAP. II.

"Seize, seize the hour
Ere it slips from you. Seldom comes the moment
In life, which is indeed sublime and mighty
To make a just decision possible."

COLERIDGE.

THE next day Stanton went down to Dum Dum; and Oakfield, after presenting himself at Fort William, went to Garden Reach, to accept an invitation which had promptly followed the delivery of one of his numerous letters of introduction. Here he stayed for about a fortnight, during which time he became a little more accustomed to Indian, or at least Calcutta fashions. The indiscriminate hospitality which takes in as many guests as the house will hold, feeds and shelters them, and nothing more, found little favour with him at first; though he was forced to acknowledge that in a community where, partly by custom, partly by necessity, private individuals had to stand in the place of innkeepers to new comers, it was more gracious to admire the liberality with which all doors were thrown open

to receive unknown guests, than to complain of the little attention paid to them when received. He saw little of Calcutta society. It was the month of April, so he was confined to the house reading and writing all day, and in the evening was content to saunter in the magnificent walks by the banks of the river, without seeking to go further. To tell the truth he was still stunned by the wonderful change which a few weeks had wrought *for*, but not *in* him. He himself being unchanged, he was perplexed by the entire metamorphose of all his circumstances. Both what was gone and what was come pressed upon him, now that the excitement of the overland voyage was past. His beloved northern home,—his friends,—his country, —and that university where three years of his life had rolled by in such a continual flow of unchequered happiness, — all these were as the sound of a familiar note within him; while not less audible, but in strange and jarring accompaniment, was that awakened by the new sights and sounds which met him at every turn. There were the scorching sun and almost fearful verdure of Bengal; the ceaseless hum of unseen animal life; the white, flat-roofed, hundred-doored palaces of the European inhabitants; the mud hovels of the swarming natives; the natives themselves, and their strange language; the dull, broad Hooghly, bearing

down the dead bodies of Hindus, glad to have their last home in its holy waters; bearing, too, the living ships of less revering nations to all parts of the globe; there, above all, were the palm and the banyan tree, so alive with oriental association, speaking of a time ere yet that British power, now so manifest in all directions, had emerged from infancy in its own island cradle; when the same scene might have been witnessed here,—the same scorching sky,—the same rich vegetation,—the same funereal river; while primæval Brahmins, sitting in primæval groves, asked, "where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?" Mixed with the first impressions of outward objects, arose, in Oakfield's mind, that wonder which must more or less strike every one on first arrival in India; which may well follow them all the days of their sojourn there,—for most wonderful it is,—at the extraordinary fact of British dominion, so manifest everywhere; apparently so firmly planted in the soil, and yet so manifestly separate from it; so that while it was impossible to fancy the power being swept away, it was easy to look round and think of it as gone; the prominent feature in the picture, still, were it once removed, the picture would seem almost the same without it. But his wonder was reverent, not unmixed with awe, for

he felt how surely Nemesis attended upon the power which he witnessed, and had doubts whether Nemesis had been altogether satisfied. But the thoughts which gave the prevailing tone to the maze which bewildered him were themselves most indistinct. He was dissatisfied with himself, and knew not why; he had a vague sense of a general life, independent of that of time or place, which he still was separated from; he was dimly conscious of a state of truthfulness from which his ordinary conversation with the world still kept him apart. At times he had flashes of conviction in which the truth seemed to stand out to him clear even to a truism. In these seasons the insincerity of ordinary society and ordinary life became intolerable to him: standing face to face, as it were, with truth, he shuddered at the thousand separations of deed and manner which the common routine of civilised life was ever interposing. Religiously brought up as a child, he had passed a creditable career at Winchester; and, full of hopeful confidence, went up to Oxford as a student of Christ Church. There his outward life was one of rare and awful happiness. In that wonderful society, where, for three years, an income of £200 a-year can command all the pleasures which wealth and the highest civilisation alone confer elsewhere; where common respectability is a pass to the flower

of English society ; where the regularity and cheerful monotony of monastic life are combined with the manly energy, the rare independence, the luxurious refinement, which are so characteristic of our modern English universities,—the days of his youth were spent. But he was not a man who could eat and drink, rise up to play, and be satisfied. In those changing years, from nineteen to twenty-one, his mind, hitherto quiescent or satisfied by the claims of school and college duty, began to work ; and he soon found that under whatever name concealed, religion must still be the one matter of interest for an immortal being. And the one great difficulty with him was to acquire an equable impression of this truth. He looked to others to help him ; he sought external aid against those seasons of dull epicurean indifference, from which he woke from time to time, with a painful start, to the true condition of his being. For some time he inclined to the Tractarian influence then so prevalent in Oxford, and thought for a while that he had found the help he needed ; when lo ! again, in an hour of startling conviction, he found that the forms with which he had been so busily lulling his conscience had as little of the Divine in them as the forms of common worldly society. The re-action followed, and he hated the church which he thought had deceived him ;

the idea of taking orders became intolerable, and the question of what he should do came before him. Deeply impressed with the conviction that his first business in life was to deliver his own soul, he still fell into the natural error of looking round for those circumstances which might make this most easy. He had not learnt yet that it is a work far beyond the aid, happily equally beyond the control, of circumstances; he thought of emigrating. In the colonies,—in a new, fresh, and vigorous society, he thought form would, at any rate, weigh less heavily upon truth; society, if it did not help, would surely not hinder him. In this direction he was met by practical difficulties at all hands; till at last, transferring his notions of colonial to Anglo-Indian society, with an ignorance marvellous indeed, but common to all Englishmen not connected by family ties with India, he fancied he had solved the problem,—that by obtaining an Indian appointment a maintenance would be secured to him, while he, under utterly new circumstances, might begin life anew, try once more to realise his theory of bringing religion into daily life, without the necessity of denying it at every turn in obedience to some fashion or dogma of society; and then, as to his work in life, was not every European in India engaged in the grand work of civilising Asia? So he wrote to his friends that he wished

to go to India. His mother was disappointed, but not altogether astonished. The last vacation that Edward had spent at home, she had observed with anxiety the painful, unsettled state of his mind; had watched how he still sought help from without, and seemed daily more and more disappointed as he daily failed to find it. Still the blow to Mrs. Oakfield was severe. The loss of her eldest son would be none the less severely felt that a large and happy family remained behind. Fondly attached herself to that Church of which her husband had been, during thirty years, a faithful minister, Mrs. Oakfield had hoped, ere long, to see her son working in the same harvest-field; and the very thought of the military profession was in itself painful to one who had passed all her days amid most unmilitary influences; who had long been learning daily lessons of love and peace, among the lakes and hills of Cumberland. Still, she was too wise a woman, and too good a mother, to oppose what she knew to be the conscientious wish of her son; and when, after some time, she found him quite earnest in his determination, she exerted herself in the hitherto *terra incognita* of East Indian patronage to procure the appointment, as though it had been the darling wish of her own heart. At last her efforts were successful, and Mr. Edward Oakfield, B. A., son of the late Rev.

E. Oakfield, M. A., was appointed a cadet of infantry, on the Bengal Establishment. It was with a heart full of love and tenderness that he went down to spend his last Christmas at Leatheburn, which place he would have to leave for India in January, 1845. He was at Oxford when he received the news of his appointment, enjoying the leisurely life of a long-sleeved bachelor. Most thoroughly would he have enjoyed it had not his somewhat morbid mind suspected, and felt alarmed at, the very sense of its happiness. He had read respectably, and taken a good "second;" his conduct *in statu pupillari* had been stainless; loving the river, and pulling in the "college eight," having a large out-college acquaintance, and generally "knocking in" very late at nights, he was yet *sans reproche* in the eyes of the censors, and had even attained to the capricious favour of the Dean, by occasionally reading a theme in hall. His prospects in life were, in common parlance, — good. He might "stay up" on his studentship with the chance of a tutorship, and the certainty of a living; or he might perhaps be vicar of Leatheburn, as his father had been before him. But even had he felt inclined to yield to this seducing prospect, the Thirty-nine Articles stood up as an impassable barrier; and though he felt that if any one told him he was a fool to give up his present position

and go to India for no earthly reason, he would find it hard to answer him, yet he felt also that he really was acting not foolishly, but wisely; he verily believed that in the happiness of his college life there had been and was a benumbing influence which it was wise in him to shake off, though he might find it impossible to explain to others why he did so. Still it was a blow to him when he walked across Tom Quad with the open letter, announcing his appointment, in his hand, and looked up to Tom Tower, and thought that the nights were numbered in which he would have his share in the hundred and one mystical strokes. His interview with the Dean was short, and to the point. Dr. Seaford was not a man to make leave-taking painful, and as Oakfield received his cold and hardly courteous permission to leave the college, he could not help feeling glad, among his many regrets, that he had at least done with the Dean of Christ Church.

His parting with his friends was painful,—with the place itself mournful,—with that important member of a college establishment, the cook, comi-tragic. He, the cook, had ever been accustomed to regard the Dean of Christ Church as the great planet of the world; the canons, tutors, and students, as moons of graduated dignity revolving round him. The idea of a young student volun-

tarily quitting that position, not for a living, nor yet to marry; retiring in fact upon nothing, was new to him, and rather shocking. He suspected that there was "something under it."

Oakfield was amused at his openly-expressed wonder, not to say contempt. After all, he thought, this man does but express plainly what almost all my friends think. Those who preach on Sundays, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, think me a fool or worse, because I, believing what they preach, seek a life where I have more hope of laying hold upon things that are not vain. Assuredly the life here is a wonderfully pleasant one; I have little enough temptation to go roaming, God knows.

So, thinking he looked his last upon Oxford, and having taken a farewell pull on the river, and eaten a farewell dinner in hall, he left the place where he had spent the three last care-chequered years of his life, and that night travelled down to Leatheburn. To one who had been brought up among the mountains there were other than human friends to be parted with. In his solitary walks by the lake, in his last pilgrimage to the top of Helvellyn, whence he looked down upon almost the whole of that mountain district, which was to him a lesser country, for which all his feelings, as an Englishman, were doubly refined, he felt how much he was about to sacrifice. One afternoon,

walking with his usual companion, his favourite sister, about two years younger than himself, he expressed, for the only time, some doubt as to the step he had taken.

"What," he said, "Margaret, if, after all, this should be a mistake, to be found out too late?"

"You do not think that," she replied.

"I don't know: sometimes I fancy that I am more driven by a superstitious, unfaithful dread of the happiness of my present life, than by any distinct call to go abroad." He stopped, as if expecting an answer.

"You know, dear Edward," his sister said tenderly, "You know how hard it is for me to answer you. You have said so little to me, or any of us, as to your reasons for this sad change; none of us dare urge you to stay, but do not expect me to find reasons why you should go."

"I had no wish, I am sure, Margaret, to be reserved to my own family; I have told you as much as I have my mother; but I have told her very little, for there is a confusion in my own mind, in the midst of which I can detect, more by instinct than by reason, the necessity of the step I am taking; and yet I now regret not having forced myself to be more communicative, if only for my own sake, that by utterance my views might become clearer to myself."

"Well then," said his sister, laughing, "let me catechise you."

"But not in the hope of perverting me?"

"No, no; quite disinterestedly; for your own sake you know. To begin: how long is it since you first took this notion of going abroad into your head?"

"I can answer that more precisely than you expect," replied her brother; "do you remember the last day before I left home last October, my walking to Anderton alone?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, in my way back I sat down at the top of Dunmail Raise, and there I stayed for an hour or more, over the old king's bones; and out of that hour's cogitations has sprung my cadetship. I had to go up to Oxford the next day, for my last term. You know how much I had been occupied all that vacation with the thought of the schools; but that day, for the first time, I looked steadily beyond the degree epoch, and then"—

"And what then, Edward."

"Why a maze, a jungle: the one thing I could see clearly was that the time was coming when I must do something, and that all the natural openings to me were blocked up by the impossibility of my taking orders?"

"Alas, Edward, who would have thought, a

year ago, that you would have spoken of that as an impossibility?"

"Alas, say I too, dear Margaret; and were the Church of England and its ministry always and everywhere what we have seen here with our dear father in these happy valleys, the impossibility would never have been; supposing, at least, all such stumbling-blocks as the Thirty-nine Articles taken out of the way; but how could I devote myself for life to the service of that Church which I have tried and found so cruelly wanting? In some things I still love the Church of England; — the gentlemanly element in it, as it has been called, and by which I understand the seemliness of its ordinances and ritual, — so satisfying to one's mere taste, is, and always will be, a great attraction to me; but when I think of its wretched sectarian spirit, such as I have seen and known it, of its profession, so magnificently exalted, and its practice, so often standing in the way of, and even persecuting, the Truth, I shudder at the thought of yielding myself to it, as I would fain hope to yield myself to whatever service I may enter."

"But you could surely have stayed at Oxford without taking orders?"

"Rather like a fish out of water; besides, I do not feel capable of a retired hermit life; and the mixing in society, without any active business in it,

was what I dreaded. No, I am sure that I was right there, that if I would not take orders I could not stay at the university. Well, then, you see what was left, — the bar? It is a hopeless calling in these days, even had I myself any vocation for it. And besides, — in short, Margaret, I may and will say to you, what I would hardly say to any one else, — I shrink from saying it even to myself, because I feel it is a principle so far above my practice; but still I do believe it, and that it is which lies at the bottom of all my restlessness as people call it, — I cannot reconcile my belief in the bible, with ordinary life and its ordinary fashions and practices. You see the impossibility of alleging this as a motive; exposing oneself to charges of inconsistency at every turn; and I have given way to these fashions as much as anybody. I feel that if I could lay bare my heart to the most loving of friends, he would be hardly able to pity me; seeing how impossible it is for me to reconcile the world with truth, the most partial would condemn, as something too gross for pity, my weakness, if not my hypocrisy. From the latter I can only say I am free, God knows it; I could only assert it, hardly expecting to be believed. Yet, though I have lived in the world, — though I doubt whether even the men with whom I mixed most at Christ Church

thought me a religious man, — and that, because I could not and would not adopt the phraseology and habits which they are accustomed to think of as going to make up a religious man, — because I longed to combine what they are taught to think most separate, the utmost freedom of thought and a firm belief in the New Testament, — because, lastly, despairing of being understood or tolerated if I said all that I thought, I said nothing, and joined in their pursuits, and their amusements and conversation, as though I had all in common with them, — still, I declare that while taking a genuine interest in these things, there was ever another and a far deeper interest beneath, which I shared not with them, and of which they knew nothing, and that I still cherished in my inmost heart, though in my practice so weak and stumbling, — the religion of Christ, as the one thing needful. A fool would say that this was saying a great deal for myself. I know that I say it with feelings farthest from self-laudation, with bitter self-reproach rather, that the religious feeling and desire, which I do aver was predominantly present to me, did not show itself more in my living. I know there ought to have been a marked difference between me and worldly men, — felt by them, though not displayed by me; that there was not, was from my utter weakness; but still, when I fancy myself back in the same

society, I can hardly fancy things being different; I could not adopt language and habits which would be unnatural to me as long as we kept to things extraneous to religion.

"My friends and I got on very well; pleasant, clever, gentlemanly fellows they were, and I was and am attached to them sincerely; but once or twice, when sorely against the grain, I did try to open what you would call a religious conversation. I found it would not do. No; I can understand a man going into society, as some men did, at the time of the reformation, and afterwards of the first Wesleyan movements, and at the entire sacrifice of personal feelings boldly rebuking vice and speaking the truth; but such a man is not a member of society, he is a prophet — an apostle. But are all prophets? For those who are not prepared to sacrifice themselves, or feel unequal to the task, I see only two courses open, — either to quit society altogether, or to mix in it on its own terms; having one's religion between oneself and God, and, if one be happy enough to find them, some favoured friends, such as, thank God, I have in my own family; but as to being in the world and not of it, I recognise that, indeed, as a perfect idea, but from my own experience, pronounce it, for myself at least — impossible. That the way in which I have hitherto evaded this problem has been weak

and wretched I will allow, it is that very thing that impels me to break off from my late life, for I see no possibility in that life of solving it."

"But, Edward, if the attractive and agreeable society which you mixed in was irreligious, surely there was other to be found, less pleasant, perhaps, but where you would not have been so tempted to the dangerous compromise you describe."

"In the first place, I doubt, Margaret, whether I, or indeed anybody, is capable of so fearful a sacrifice as joining himself for life to utterly uncongenial society; and, besides, with them I should have had to act other lies, less dangerous, perhaps, than in the former case, but still false and destroying, as all lies are. I don't the least mean to say that many of those men with their surplice and white-tie fiddle faddle, were not really excellent men, better men, how often have I felt, than I; the forms which they extol and love may be a help to them, but they were not, and never could be, to me; and it would be utterly impossible, when struggling for life and death with such fearful realities as sin and ignorance, to have any true sympathy with those who are ever thrusting to you as the one panacea, the shape of a building or the cut of a waistcoat. At least I tried it and found I could not."

"But surely all the religious men in Oxford are not of this party?"

"Some of the best and ablest of them are: men who, I always felt, must have had a deep sense of the living truth under this panoply of external frippery; but there was no getting at it, and so for me it might as well not have been. I never was guilty of the presumptuous folly of thinking they were not truth-loving men, but I found that as I myself loved the truth, yet ignored it in deference to the fashion of the society I lived in, so did they completely smother it under their whiteticism; so it was only a difference of disguises; for I consider boat-racing and cricket every bit as much matters of religion as surplice questions, and so on; but still, as you say, there were others,—religious men certainly, and whom their worst enemies could not have accused of Popish vanities; but, if I am to make a painful sacrifice, I prefer going to India, to joining Exeter Hall. Mind, don't think again that I don't know, and admire, and revere the excellence of many individuals calling themselves evangelicals, but I do think that their party bitterness and ignorant self-satisfied narrow-mindedness, has done more harm to the cause of good than the great Popery lie itself. They again seem to me to overload the truth as injuriously with their unlearned semi-magical prophecy disquisitions, and wretched belabouring of that poor dead giant Popery, as the

other people with surplice follies, &c.,—and, as a matter of taste, the last is more attractive."

"But surely, Edward, there are religious men who are not partisans?"

"God forbid we should doubt it, Margaret, for they are the salt of the earth; but either they keep their holy secret in their own hearts, and bow in sadness to a state of things which they are not strong enough to alter, or when they are to be seen at all, they are alone, isolated, misunderstood, shedding truth indeed in all directions, which does or will bear fruit somewhen or somewhere, but which has not penetrated yet into society, so as to re-model even a small portion of it. There are men whom one may look up at and admire, and thank God for,—such men there are; but societies—or sections of a society of such men—not."

"But don't you think, Edward, that these men, who you admit are to be found, have themselves met with the same want in society which you have? And yet you see they have remained, and have overcome."

"*They* have,—but how many have remained, and have *not* overcome, but yielded; either led away altogether by the worldliness which so infects the whole air around them, or, if seeking that help from society which it is natural to man to seek,

are deceived by one false guide or another, till with desperate heresy they choose a guide, false or true, and abide by it rather than seek any longer; drugging their consciences with forms and ceremonies, or deafening them with some sectarian war cry; or, which is every day becoming more and more common, seeing on the one hand the dominion of the world so strong that they cannot but believe it to be half divine, and on the other disgusted with the pettiness of one party and the ignorant folly of another, they think that the faith over which the two profess to be wrangling is itself a narrowness and a folly; and shake off, as they suppose, all bonds of old belief; and believe in what they see,—the world; or in what they feel,—their own intellectual powers; and so pass on into a wretched jumble of epicureanism and self-worship,—which is, I think, Margaret, a greater calamity than going to India.

"But do you expect that going to India will free you from these dangers and difficulties?"

"Ah, stop! you are getting on too fast; what I am telling you now is why I left Oxford. I do not know what I go to, but I know that I leave what is full of danger to me. You must remember that it is not often in life that one can change one's circumstances. I find myself surrounded by those which hinder rather than help me; I will make an

effort and detach myself from them while I yet can."

"But do you not, then, ever contemplate the possibility of finding yourself worse off in India than at home? You see you do not know what to expect; suppose your experiment fails. You cannot be in the same position as if you had never made it."

"Why, I think I should shrink less than you would expect from the possibility of having to confess my experiment a failure. I think the virtue of abiding consistently by one thing is rather exaggerated by feelings of worldly prudence; I do not see why it is not as reasonable for a man's convictions to fix his circumstances, as for his circumstances, which is generally the case, to fix his convictions."

"Would you have all the world, then, continually shifting their business, in the vain hope of finding some path which might make their duty easy?"

"Your *reductio ad absurdum*, my darling catechiser, might be conclusive, if the world at large were very anxious about the path of duty, about the truth, that is; but those who honestly seek this, and not an income, as the first thing in life, will always be a minority."

"But this minority must *have* incomes; they must have enough to live upon."

"I admit it, and that law of necessity must, to a certain extent, influence their road in life; but need not, and should not, I am certain, to one twentieth part the extent it does. It is in obedience to this law that I go to India, which is by no means the thing of all others which I esteem the best, but, as far as I see, the best possible; the best combination of the requirements of my inner and outer man."

"And yet you have said nothing as to how you expect it in any way to satisfy the former."

"No;—because my first great motive is not to do, but to undo; always, you know, the beginning of reform; not to choose this or that future, but to get rid of this present;—and yet there is something attractive in the notion of India, even to my vague and ignorant conceptions of it. A man there must almost feel his very existence as one of the English possessors of India, of some historical dignity, and the first steps in active life bring him at once to real, immediate concern with the world's march. But I know so little of India, that it is more candid to own that I do make this step as an experiment,—feeling sure that I do right in leaving England, where I can do nothing, and where I fear little good is being done to me; where I cannot but think that the daily spectacle of social enormities, so utterly irreconcilable with the faith

which you and I hold,—must have a bad effect upon a man's mind, leading him almost imperceptibly, by constant use, to acquiesce in what is false and monstrous; and having thus made up my mind to leave England, I see no chance of that necessary income we were speaking of, any where but in India."

"So then you take a new life on trial, convinced only that your present life will not do for you?"

"Precisely so."

"And what if, on trial, your new life does not suit you any better?"

"That question I think I may answer by saying, 'Take no thought for the morrow.' I honestly believe it to be my duty to go; I shall go in faith; not hoping to be miraculously fed and clothed, but still not thinking about the matter till I am obliged to. Besides, I will not begin my new life by supposing it will be a failure; in the utterly unknown future there is hope, which I shall hold by as long as I can. Have I satisfied you?"

"You have so far satisfied me that I believe you are right, thinking as you do, to give up an Oxford life."

"An English life, say; and then can you think of anything else I could do if I would?"

"No,—I cannot."

"Well, then, I have one confidante who knows why I go; at least, as much as I do myself, and who, when she hears of my life in India, will think of this walk by dear Thirlwater on this quiet grey November afternoon, and of that hour on Dunmail Raise last summer, from which my Indian life was born. Oh, Margaret! do you think I have much temptation to go? I think nothing so proves the miraculous power that money or 'prospects in life,' have over men, as the way in which they will always give up family and country for them. God knows that no lower hope than truth and a peaceful conscience could draw me, I do not say from you all, but from this beloved country."

He was much moved, and they walked on in silence. It was one of those damp, mild evenings, so common in a northern winter, when all things seem in harmony with peaceful sorrow and "calm decay." The clouds which had been drawn up over the northern extremity of the valley, leaving a space filled by the looming misty outline of Blencathra, now rolled down nearly to the lake, while the evening darkness succeeding almost without an interval to sunset, made all objects in the quiet meadows, through which Oakfield and his sister were walking homewards, more and more indistinct, till nothing was to be seen but the white

bank of clouds that shrouded Helvellyn, and the lights in the scattered farms up the hill side; nothing heard but the lapping of the waters of the lake, and the murmur of the running brooks down Leatheburn Fells.

CHAP. III.

"I find myself
As among strangers! not a trace is left
Of all my former wishes, former joys;
Where has it vanished to? There was a time
When even, methought, with such a world as this
I was not discontented! Now how flat!
How stale! No life, no bloom, no flavour in it!
My comrades are intolerable to me;
My arms, my military duties — Oh!
They are such wearying toys."

COLERIDGE.

THE day arrived that Oakfield was to leave home. It were a mistake to suppose that the strength of his conviction, as to the necessity of leaving the country, in any way deadened to him the pain of breaking up all old associations and parting from his family. His brother Herbert, eight or nine years younger than himself, just gone to Winchester, was to accompany him to Southampton; he had to take leave of the rest at home. It was a tearful breakfast party that morning. His little sisters, of four and five years old, had, of course, very vague notions about India,

but they had a consciousness that "Eddie" was going very far off, and as there seemed to be a good deal of crying going on, of course they helped. Margaret, as her custom was, was too much engaged in comforting others to give way to her own sorrow at losing that best of all friends to a girl, an elder brother. To poor Mrs. Oakfield it was the heaviest blow that had befallen her since her husband's death. There was not much said, and in the silence of deep sorrow they parted. His young brother accompanied him to the harbour at Southampton; and when he could no longer distinguish him among the crowd on the quay, Edward Oakfield felt that the separation from his family was complete, and the new chapter of his life begun. We need not follow him through the often-described overland route. In company with Stanton he wandered over the Rock of Gibraltar; admired the blue sky, the white ground, and orange-gardened streets of Malta; visited Cleopatra's Needle, at Alexandria; gazed in speechless wonder at the Pyramids of Egypt; felt himself, not without awe, within fifty miles of Mount Sinai; feasted his eyes upon the tropical beauty of Ceylon; was tossed in the surf of Madras; and finally landed in Calcutta, as has been already described, in the beginning of April.

He had not been long at Garden Reach when

he received orders to go up the river to Hajeepoor, there to do duty with the 81st regiment of Native Infantry.

Fresh from England, his robust frame was little affected by the tremendous heat of a steamer, on the Ganges, in the month of May; he was inclined to hope that the horrors of the Indian climate had been exaggerated. The scenery, too, exceeded his expectations; the terrible forest solitude of the Sunderbunds was full of interest to an European imagination. And although, higher up, the banks of the Ganges had little beauty to recommend them, yet the hugeness of the river and the sight of the alligators had a novelty that might make up for a little dulness. There were three more cadets on the same steamer, going up to that great griff depôt, Oudapoor, as uninteresting as boys of seventeen, fresh from a private school, generally are. Just as Oakfield was beginning to get tired of the Ganges and live alligators, he reached Hajeepoor, and proceeded, in a palki, to call upon the adjutant of the corps to which he was attached, and was by him introduced to the officers of the regiment, and initiated into the mysteries of the goose step.

And now his experience of Indian society began; and what conclusion he drew from this experience may be best seen by a letter written

by him to Stanton two months after his arrival at Hajeepoor.

"My Dear Stanton,

"I begin to think I have made a mistake. There — the murder's out, and get your laugh over as soon as you can. Don't think that I'm going back again just yet; I have registered a vow to give the country a fair trial,—three years at least; though I confess I dread the prospect, unless most stations are very unlike Hajeepoor, and most regiments very different from the 81st. Where is the energy by which British India has been conquered? Not in the army —at least in the officers. These are really, in nine cases out of ten, so far as I have seen, mere animals, with no single idea on any subject in the world beyond their carcasses. We have all been accustomed to hear the officers of the Queen's army spoken of as models of gentlemanliness at any rate; and the good world has almost confessedly excused their notorious immorality, as a professional failing, to be regretted indeed, but still quite atoned for by their intense polish; which things I had transferred to the Company's army; and was really quite astounded to find that even this quality was wanting. I do not mean only that the higher elements of the gentlemanly character are wanting. Courtesy to inferiors (Heaven save the mark in this country! fancy talking to an officer of courtesy to a native!), honesty in money transactions, and so on; but there is not even a re-

finement of outward manners; so far from being above, they seem infinitely below par in this respect. I had always thought of a mess as the abode of luxurious refinement, even it might be to effeminacy. I find it a bad tavern, without the comfort of even such an establishment. I had not expected to hear literary conversation at a mess table, but still less such appalling ribaldry as I did hear in the fortnight during which I belonged to the mess. I am not likely to be prudish in these matters; I have spent all my life at Winchester and Oxford, and at both places have been in company with boys and men who were noted for this style of conversation, but am quite certain that a man saying, at a wine party, such things as are common at the 81st mess, would have been kicked out of the room as a gross offender, I do not say against morality, but gentlemanly taste. They pride themselves, indeed, on a very subtle distinction between dinner and after dinner. A man is supposed to be reasonably decent while the cloth is on the table, but may compensate himself by the utmost license of blackguardism directly it is off. I stayed in the mess for a fortnight, but could not stand it any longer; so now I live alone, and see very little of the officers in consequence. Another source of astonishment to my unsophisticated mind is the utter absence, not only of gentlemanly, but military feeling. There are more exceptions here than in the other case, I own. There are more *officers* than *gentlemen;* and there are two men in the regiment who appear to be both; but, for

the rest, they are about as much soldiers as they are Christians; and their worst enemy could not reproach them with the latter title. I suppose they would fight in action, but as to the duties of a soldier in time of peace, they entirely ignore them. How on earth a corps holds together with such an utter absence of discipline and *esprit de corps* on the part of its officers, I cannot imagine; I suppose it is that the adjutant is a good officer, and does the work of the whole regiment himself. The rest are nonentities; but I pity poor John Company, who must find them terribly expensive ones. As to the commanding officer, there *is* one I know, for I called on him, and saw the poor old man on parade at muster, but otherwise might be in happy ignorance of his existence; it would be hard to blame him for doing nothing, and being a complete cipher in the regiment which he is paid for commanding, because he is, I believe, physically incapable, half-blind, quite lame, and almost imbecile. Whether the command of a regiment should be entrusted to such a man, is quite another question. I can only say that Jack Sepoy must be a very docile animal, and require very little commanding.

"I go out very little, and spend most of my time in reading, glad to find that I can become so reconciled to solitude. But I am not sure that solitude is a good or natural condition for a man to be in; but better, I am quite sure, and more natural, than bad, worthless society. I want to know how you have managed and do manage. Is it that I am singularly unlucky in the

lines that have fallen to me? or is it that you have already become, like the eels, used to skinning, and that I before long shall become so too? Still I feel at times glad to be here; after the enervating ease of an university life, I fancy that the cold bath of physical and mental discomfort is a good, though harsh, remedy. So I trust; and so for the present I solace myself with the hope that I am being schooled by discipline; but what the future is to be I cannot guess any more than I could four months ago. I am reading the languages, and find 'Bagh o Bahar,' slow, certainly; but universal experience and common sense agree in recommending these studies, grievous as they are. 'And if you pass,' say my dear, good-natured friends, 'you may get an appointment!' Bus! (you see my Hindostance knowledge already carries me the length of that emphatic monosyllable.) And you will think me affected and fastidious, my dear, good natured friends, if I ask, 'What then?' What if the extra allowances have really no attraction; what if the 'getting on in life' seem to be only a more subtle way of holding out the same bait? I want to know what the life is in which you think it good to get on. It seems to me that my object in life must be, not so much to get an appointment, or to get on in the world, as to do work. And the obvious work of every European in India seems to me to be to justify his title to his position in a country not his own, by helping to civilise it. And do the people who hold your appointments do this? Is this the main purpose

of the Indian Government, which makes appointments? because I think it depends upon this a good deal whether the appointments are such good things to get. However, I am getting on too fast, only I am sometimes provoked by the cool way in which people assume that what is good for them must be good for you. I am sure I do not quarrel with them for thinking appointments good things *per se;* I only beg them not to expect me to think so; but this they will not agree to; but still take as an axiom in discussing what they call 'prospects in life,' that money, and position in society, and so on, are undoubtedly good things, as certainly as truth and courage are. And yet, doubtless, all who talk so have written in their copy-books, when children, that 'the love of money is the root of all evil,' and have heard on Sundays, as men, that there are temptations attached to rank, and so on, and thought it all very right and proper of the preacher to preach so; but alas, the morality sticks to the copy-book, and the religion is reserved for the Sunday sermon; and a man who tries seriously, on Monday morning, to follow out the maxim, and lives as though he believed the Sunday discourse, is obliged either to leave society for a dreary, solitary, unprofitable, hermit's life, or to be regarded as a hypocrite or a fanatic. And thus you will find that with a few exceptions, to be counted by units, all the religious men of your acquaintance have been compelled either to quit society altogether, and thus have no influence in it at all, and confine their labours to a narrow, too

often to a narrowing, bigoted circle; or, if they remain in society, so to compromise matters that their religion itself is become to you a doubtful matter. How to hit the mean between these two is the great problem which I, at the threshold of life, have to solve, —which baffled me at Oxford, —and which is still too much for me here.

"The first alternative — the hermitising—is the one which you see I adopt at present, simply because it is less tempting, and therefore likely to be safer; but I need not tell you that I am far from satisfied with, and cannot but be restless in it. I have comfort in reading of men who have, I suppose, had the same problem to solve in their time, and yet I cannot but feel that in no age has it been so difficult as it is for us now. For the devil, in these days, has grown so confoundedly respectable, that it is impossible to denounce him in a shape that shall at once be recognised and allowed as evil. When men were persecuted for the very profession of Christianity, Christianity was likely, with those who did profess it, to be a real thing; and a man had but to make up his mind and choose a course, plain, clear, manifest to all men; and so on through the downward generations; in the struggle of the Reformers with Popery, with the living, —not as now-a-days, at Exeter Hall, with the dead, —giant, and in the Puritan movement, in England; Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood, stood divided by a broad intelligible line of demarcation. But now they are all jumbled together in such a delicious hotch

potch, — Christian form and heathen fact, — Christian Sunday preaching, — that the true course for a good man to navigate is become almost undiscernible. He may desire the truth, and think that in some measure he, in his own mind, discerns it; he goes out and is at once met by some universal usage of society which his sense of truth immediately recognises as a lie. Well, let him yield to what he cannot mend, and pass on with an inward protest. But, alas, when is this to stop? He will soon have his whole life an inward protest. But what if he does *outwardly* protest against loose language, against low principles, such as money loving, rank loving, and the like? Suppose him to say, 'I dare not take six hundred a month, because I am sufficiently tempted to sins of omission with four hundred.' Suppose him, I say, to utter such a sentence, some Monday morning, why he really says nothing more than the good world has been complacently hearing as God's truth the day before, from the Rev. Mr. Commonplace, but is yet, because he says it on the wrong day (there is a time for all things, says the world, piously quoting Ecclesiastes), anathematised as a methodistical humbug, — probably as an inconsistent hypocrite into the bargain; or if he gets to some of the world's very particular weaknesses, — if he ventures to say, 'it is not good to resent an affront — it is good to bear one,' and so allows some overbearing blackguard to say an insolent thing, he is at once excommunicated as polluted with the deadly sin. My idea of a soldier is — and I think you will

allow it is the true idea, — a Christian, a man, a gentleman, — graduating downwards, but including all three. Society, unhappily, differs so far as to this idea, as to insist upon the gentleman, — be rather particular about the man, — and consider the Christian a little superfluous; in fact, rather a bore than otherwise. I cannot at all give in to society; I really dare not do it, because I believe it will be the worse for me if I do, fifty years hence, when my gentlemanliness will probably be worn out, and my manhood with it; but what am I to do if I cannot persuade society to give in to me either? Here I come round again, you see, to the beginning of the circle, and only re-state the problem. Forgive my thus troubling you with what can hardly be of interest to you; it is the consequence of solitude that one inflicts long out-pourings upon one's correspondents. Good bye, and believe me

"Yours affectionately,

"E. Oakfield."

However harsh the judgment pronounced, perhaps too hastily, in the beginning of this letter, it is hardly more so than that passed by most thinking men, in the first shock which they encounter from Anglo-Indian society. In many cases the strong sense of indignation and disgust becomes blighted by habit; or redeeming points appear which had been lost sight of in the first dismayed glance. But certainly the first experiences of

Indian society are, to most, disappointing, and often shocking; and often lead, for a time, to that complete seclusion which Oakfield at first adopted. But there are few men, especially young men, who can make up their minds to a lifetime of complete seclusion; and Oakfield, after trying it for two months, began to be alarmed at the morbid, moody temper which he felt to be gaining on him. To sit by and condemn, is an easy, but a dangerous habit; and he determined once more to try the experiment of joining, at least partially, in society; resolved, however, at once to quit, if he found himself again beginning to give in to its falsehoods, to the injury of his own sense of truth.

There was a young ensign, belonging to the regiment with which he was doing duty, whom he had, from the first, felt more interested in than any other of the officers.

Ensign Arthur Vernon had been in India about a year, but was four years younger than Oakfield. Brought up at home, he was sent forth over the threshold of life, at the critical age of seventeen, to make his way with such helps as he could find. His handsome, but delicate, countenance had first attracted Oakfield's attention, among the coarse prematurely old faces of his companions; and the favourable impression always made by a handsome countenance, especially in a

boy or very young man, was confirmed by the courtesy with which he had invited the new comer to take up his quarters together with him and his friend Lieutenant Cade. The offer was first made when Oakfield's fit of dismay, at the set in which he found himself, was at its height; and he had declined it; young Vernon, however, had repeated it from time to time, and Oakfield's conscience reproached him for having refused. "After all," he thought, "that poor boy may be as dissatisfied as I am with his companions; one year in India has not destroyed the beauty of his face nor the boyish gentlemanliness of his manner. I dare say he's a very good fellow, and perhaps while giving in, in appearance, to the force of things around him, just as I did at Oxford, has as little real sympathy with them." So the next day, as they were returning from parade, Oakfield rode up to Vernon, and said, to his surprise, "Vernon, have you still room for me in your quarters, if I ask leave to change my mind, and accept the kind invitation you gave me some time ago to chum with you?"

"Oh, of course; I shall be delighted; come over now, and have a cup of tea, and look at the bungalow."

"Thank you: you don't think Cade will think three too many; I shouldn't like to come where I wasn't wanted you know."

"Cade? Oh no: he wants to get a third man very much; he told me to ask you when you first came."

"Oh, did he?" said Oakfield, rather disappointed. "I'm sure I'm much obliged to him."

"Why," said the other, "I don't know that you need be; I believe—happy, of course, as he'll be to see you—that his principal wish was to pay thirty rupees a month house rent, instead of fifty: but I assure you," he added, in a more natural tone, "that I shall be very glad indeed if you'll join us; I was so sorry that you left the mess, though, after all," and he blushed as he spoke, "I didn't wonder at it." There was a boyish frankness about this last sentence which put Oakfield completely at his ease again; for, to say the truth, the thought of being solicited to live with a man for the sake of lowering the shares of house rent had not altogether pleased him.

They had by this time reached the bungalow. It was certainly too large a house for two bachelor subalterns, and had comfortable room for three; and had the advantage also of a large compound.

"We have these two sitting rooms, you see," said young Vernon; "and here's my room. Cade has his room on that side; and into this, in which Cade generally sits in the day time, you, I hope, will send your things in the course of the day."

"Why I would rather, I think, let your chum know first."

"What's the good? he won't be back till the end of the month, and will, I tell you, be only too happy to find you established. Just stay here and breakfast, and send for your things, that's a good fellow."

So Oakfield very willingly allowed himself to be persuaded: and being, even in two months, infected with that spirit of locomotion which makes change of house or station so ordinary and unexciting an event to an Indian, sent word to his bearer to bring his things over to Cade Sahib's bungalow, and sat down to breakfast with his new chum.

"Cade will be back at the end of the month, you say," Oakfield began, still harping upon his unseen fellow lodger.

"Yes; he must be present at muster: you have never seen him, I think?"

"No; he went on leave just before I joined."

"He's a very good sort of fellow is Cade," said Vernon, volunteering what Oakfield hardly liked to ask. "As good a hearted fellow as ever lived." The commendation was not altogether satisfactory; for Oakfield knew what a multitude of blackguardism was often included under the vague title of a "good-hearted fellow."

"Have you lived with him long?" he asked.

"Ever since I joined the corps; we get on very well together, and he'd be a capital chum if he was only a little more regular in paying the rent."

"A defect, certainly: does he often omit to pay?"

"He must owe, I should think, nearly a year's rent now;—I'm half afraid of their being down upon me for it."

"Why, you don't mean to say that he'd allow you to pay his house rent?" said Oakfield, with very griffish surprise.

"Oh, I don't suppose he'd look at it in that light; he says himself he'd pay if he could; but, poor fellow, he only gets fifty rupees a month, and you can't expect a man to be very regular in his payments upon that."

"Only fifty rupees!" exclaimed Oakfield, still more griffishly. "Where does the other two hundred and fifty go? He has a company, I suppose?"

"Cade? oh, of course; he's fourth lieutenant; why, he's cut two hundred and fifty a month by an infernal bank: isn't it shame?"

"Yes, it is indeed," answered Oakfield, with somewhat dishonest vagueness; "a very great shame; but, I say, Vernon, suppose, as you say,

they do come down upon you for this three hundred and sixty rupees, what shall you do?"

"Oh, I don't know; go into the banks, I suppose. I think it does me immense credit having kept out of them so long."

It was easy to see that the indifferent tone was a mere manner of recent growth; it was easy and very sad to detect the paint of sham manliness, clumsily daubed over a truer instinct of honesty and a genuine manly shame. Oakfield saw it, and would have given much to be able to show his companion how needless the superficial disguise was, how ready he was to sympathise with him; not with his assumed bravado, but his true self, which still lay beneath it, though wearing out, it might be, from continued sepulture. But his reserve prevented him from speaking out; perhaps some remnant of the wretched Oxford etiquette, which he had almost insensibly acquired, prevented him from taking the frank, honest tone, which is so much more safe, and gives offence so much more rarely than most young men are disposed to believe. But though he thus lost the first opportunity that offered itself to break down the barrier of an assumed heartlessness between himself and his friend, yet this, their first conversation, tended greatly to confirm him in his hope, that when it was broken down they should find much

in which to sympathise. Arthur Vernon was one of many who come out to India at sixteen, with no better fortification than a home education may have given them. He had perhaps an advantage in a delicacy of mind, as well as person, far greater than that of most boys and young men, but his gentle character was wanting in that stern discrimination between good and evil, and strong, though perhaps unequal, resolution, which is given either by rare natural endowment, or education, or sorrowful experience. The open immorality of Indian bachelors' society had at first grieved and shocked him; even now, after a year's tolerance of it, he was far from taking pleasure in it; but in all men, and especially in the very young, the desire to be liked is strong, and he had been impelled by this desire to appear to take interest in things he cared little or nothing about; to suppress the interest which he really felt; to hear, — first silently, — then approvingly, — lastly, himself give utterance to, sentiments which he did not believe in; which his conscience vaguely condemned; trying to satisfy himself the while by not joining in the actual vice, either of word or deed. But he soon found that there are inevitable penalties attached to disobeying even the vague bidding of conscience. Brought up in a religious family, he could not but feel, at times, that the religious element of his life

was gone, or fast going. He was grieved to find that though he himself did not talk like a ruffian, his presence was no restraint upon those who did; he knew that he was living with bad men, and saw that they thought him no better than themselves, but only more *griffish*. And in this predicament he was really to be pitied. He found himself claimed as a companion, with a rough good nature, by the society of which he was a member; a good-natured recognition as an equal, by older persons, is very seductive to a boy; he could not reject their kindness altogether, and so he went on with them, utterly incapable of exercising influence over them, and therefore, of necessity, being influenced by them; till, from dwelling continually on their subjects, hearing continually their principles asserted without contradiction, and being forced, for mere companionship's sake, at least to appear to take interest in their excitements, he soon lost hold of whatever feeble clue he might once have had to an inner, independent life; grew daily more reconciled to the wretchedly narrow sphere in which he found himself, and began to think that the prospect of dragging out life in eating, drinking, smoking, billiard-playing, riding, and cantonment gossip, was not intolerable. With no strong natural insight, — with no wise (though a tender and loving) education, to enable him to

withstand the ever-present influence of his daily life,—what wonder is it that this poor boy's standard of good dwindled more and more to the level of that which surrounded him?—that while his taste, early associations, and correspondence with home, kept him from being a blackguard,—he became daily more content to do and to think as others did and thought; was continually less shocked even by the grossness which at first had so offended him, and, for the rest, was learning to look upon gentlemanliness (in the Anglo-Indian acceptation of the term) and good fellowship, as the idea of life. One counteracting influence there still was, and this was his correspondence with home, which, thanks to the blessing of the overland communication, was sufficiently frequent to make itself more or less felt continually. But as if the Indian Satanas knew the harm which his cause sustained from this influence, Vernon soon found that his home feeling must be kept to himself; that any expression of the tenderness and deep happiness afforded by each arrival of overland letters, was received with indifference, if not with contempt and ridicule. But on this point he had not given in; and though Cade had more than once "chaffed" him upon the formidable packets which he despatched every fortnight, he still wrote fully and regularly. In this state he

was when Oakfield joined the regiment, to whom he was from the first forcibly attracted. There is, in the first place, a general disposition amongst Indians to welcome a fresh arrival from England; partly because, in an unchanging community, a new face is an excitement in a small way, partly because those who are groaning in dreary limbo, receive with grim satisfaction another unfortunate driven from England, the Elysian fields of exiled imagination; and this feeling is strong in proportion to the shortness of each man's own banishment, — the griff of a month feeling it most, — the veteran of thirty years' standing hardly at all. But besides this there was a gentlemanly quiet in Oakfield's manner, and in his appearance a gentlemanly determination, which had a natural charm for poor Vernon, who at times felt painfully conscious of his own weakness. He observed Oakfield's scarcely disguised amazement at the mess-table conversation, and recollected painfully the shock which he himself, now so callous, had felt only a year before; and when Oakfield withdrew from the mess, Vernon was perhaps the only one who at once divined his reason, and asked himself whether he ought not to have done the same long ago. And yet, when some of the officers (who had no conception of the real reason of Oakfield's leaving the mess, but attributed it to economy, or,

as they would say, stinginess) held forth upon the duty of supporting regimental institutions — the degeneracy of the griffs of the present day — the slowness of the particular griff in question; and concluded with "you're not such a muff, Vernon, my boy are you?" he actually felt pleased, and acknowledged that "it certainly was rather an odd thing, for a man to leave the mess only a fortnight after joining it." But, though he said so, he really admired, and half envied the resolution which he felt it must require to take a step so little likely to be popular, and was more than ever inclined to see more of Oakfield. A few days after Oakfield had moved into his new quarters, Cade returned from leave. Cade was a great man in the eyes of the regiment, — greater still in those of his chum, — greatest of all in his own. He was a stout, not very tall, red-faced, curly-haired man; overbearing in his manner, and therefore, as is the case with most overbearing men, generally having his own way; a good-natured fellow, everybody said; — so he was, good-natured enough when he had no temptation to be otherwise, as perhaps all men are, — but ignorant, coarse, and selfish. He was a specimen of a class, unhappily too common in India; he rode hard, swore hard, — in short, in his own language, lived hard. His conversation was a mixture of commercial sportsmanship, if we may

thus express racing, shooting, and betting, all considered and studied as a trade—a means of making money,—and ribaldry the most appalling.

Yorkshiremen, it is said, consider swindling venial in matters of horseflesh, but the Cades of this world take a far more liberal range. It is to be doubted, indeed, whether any robbery, except actually picking pockets, would be disapproved by them. To stick a brother officer, not only with a horse, but with any thing,—to clear out a griff at cards or billiards,—to get credit to the largest possible amount from the greatest possible number of tradesmen, without the slightest intention of any payment, present or future, except under compulsion,—to get money from relations at home under false pretences,—to sponge upon a friend who, perhaps, could ill afford it;—these were the clever dodges which men of the world learnt by their experience;—these were the signs of a state from which all griffinism (which comprises the seven deadly sins) had been eradicated. These were practices not carried on by stealth and scouted if discovered, but proclaimed,—boasted of,—universally tolerated, if not even, to a considerable extent, applauded. If all this is villany—then Cade was a villain; and if Cade was a villain, there were a good many more besides him in the service. Vernon had felt a great deal too grateful

upon first acquaintance for good nature, which cost Cade nothing. Cade asked him to come and live with him, because he wanted to have somebody to share his house rent, perhaps with some remote intention of victimising him. In this second view, if he entertained it, he was disappointed; Vernon did not play, and would not: and there are enough willing pigeons in India, without a man taking much pains to lure the unwilling. Vernon was no fool, and he soon found out that he did not owe much gratitude to his chum,—but, still, as he said, they got on very well together. At first when Cade wanted to sell a pony, he was intensely polite: after he had effected his object, and got one hundred rupees for what he knew to be barely worth forty, he was still roughly civil; sometimes indeed grew quite cordial while comparing, with infinite complacency, his own knowingness with his chum's griffishness; of course he had entirely his own way as to the distribution of rooms and so on; but this Vernon took as a matter of course, and so they jogged on, as most in similar circumstances do, seeing a great deal of each other, but really knowing little and caring less. Vernon knew nothing of Cade's chief companions, and was ignorant of some of his worst delinquencies,—he knew that he swore and got drunk very immoderately, but nobody seemed to

think there was much harm in this; he knew him to be over head and ears in debt, but every body regarded this either as a joke, or a subject of condolence: and so, as they never quarrelled, he pronounced him to be a very good-hearted fellow, though a little wild, which was the general opinion; and Cade, on the other hand, declared Vernon to be a good enough sort of chap to live with, but a damned griff.

From what Oakfield had seen of the other officers of the regiment, as well as what he had heard from Vernon, he was not prepared altogether to admire Lieutenant Cade; nor was the first greeting with that personage, — when he rode in from a long dark journey, and at seven in the morning called for brandy and water, and after a slight bow to Oakfield, turned to Vernon, and told him, with an oath, at every third word, of the tremendous pace he had ridden at; how, nobody else could have come so fast, and, indeed, how mighty a rider he was, — calculated to give a very favourable impression. When the morning lounge and bathe were over, and the three sat down to the Indian breakfast of fish, eggs, and rice, Cade considered it time to commence operations upon the new griff. He had not studied his appearance, nor did he gain any information from his self-possessed manner. There are men who are so

indifferent to a repulse, that they take no pains to guard against it beforehand by choosing their ground.

Thus Cade saw in Oakfield nothing but a griff, old looking perhaps, but still a griff, and as such fair game. Cade was not indeed much older himself, but he had come out at sixteen, and had entirely lost sight of all standard of measurement save and except that of seniority; a weakness certainly, but not an uncommon one, in the self-complacent East. He did not mean to take a patronising tone, but he could not for the life of him have avoided doing so. Vernon, who felt, though he would have hardly allowed, that there was a great difference between himself and Oakfield, and that the latter might be inclined to resent a manner which he, though so used to it, still distinctly perceived to be full of assumption, was quite uncomfortable when Cade broke out in the sublimest Cadian tone,—

"You came up about a month ago, I think?"

"Rather more,—nearly three months."

"Oh! three months,—I beg your pardon: well, and how do you like India?"

"Oh,—rather hot."

"Hot! by G—, I should think it was,—hot as hell."

Having given this specimen of gratuitous ob-

jurgation, we shall not feel bound in future always to introduce the superfluities of Mr. Cade's conversation; though, without doing so, it is impossible to do it justice; indeed, with the oaths and blasphemy taken out, there was little but monosyllables left. The catechising was resumed--

"What company are you in?"

"No 1."

"Hah,—I wish you were in No. 4, I like having a subaltern; d-- shame it is never giving me a subaltern. Like drill?"

"I don't dislike it much now, the goose-step was not lively."

"Ah, they don't give griffs half enough of it now-a-days; by Jove, sir, when I was a griff,"—and thereupon he went off into a disquisition which may easily be imagined, on the hardships he had undergone when he learnt his drill, and the great prowess which thereby he had attained to. Softened by the contemplation of his own excellence, he said to Oakfield, "Come over and have a game of billiards,—I'll drive you over."

"Thank you, I should be very happy, but I've got overland letters to write."

"Oh, my G—, another overland writing griff! why what the devil do you manage to find to write about?" "By Jove, sir," he continued, "I wrote once to my old screw of a governor to ask him to pay my debts; he wrote back in a devil of

a way asking why I got into debt, and he wouldn't pay: and, by George, it will be a blazes long time before I write to him again. No good asking you to come Vernon, and, besides, you can't play a damn."

"A little rough in his manner," Vernon said, apologetically, when Cade was gone,—"but I assure you he's not a bad sort of fellow. He's liked in the corps pretty well; and as to talking, why you know men in the army always do swear more or less."

"A hundred years ago perhaps most of them did—though I doubt whether it was quite in that style; but what disgusted me was the way he spoke of his father, and so on."

"Well, there again men say a good deal more than they mean."

"But what earthly object can a man have in saying that his father is a screw, whether he means it or not? The only motive he can have, is a wretched notion of its being unmanly—griffish I suppose your friend Cade would call it—to appear to care for home; just as fellows at school sometimes do: it is bad enough in them, but it becomes an awful thing in a man. I certainly don't admire Cade for that."

"I don't think he's worse than a good many others in this respect," repeated Vernon, hesitatingly.

"Then I'm afraid I shouldn't like a good many others."

"Oh, my dear fellow," said Vernon, in his turn assuming the man of practical experience, "it's very easy to talk, but depend upon it you'll find in a year or so that you'll have to put up with these kind of men, and won't care much about it either; I was disgusted myself at first."

"At what?" interrupted Oakfield.

"Oh, at the swearing, and the loose conversation, and all the rest of it."

"But do you feel glad to have become reconciled to it?"

"Why, what is one to do?" cried the other, colouring rather, and evading the question. "I shouldn't like to talk like that myself; but one can't go preaching to every man who swears in one's presence."

"But are there no men in the regiment who talk differently; none, in short, who are not beasts?"

"I say, Oakfield, that's rather strong, you know."

"Well, well, I beg your pardon; but I do feel strongly when I think of seven or eight officers and gentlemen talking as I heard them doing at your mess, when I belonged to it, and as Cade was just now; it's so wretchedly blackguard, — so absolutely the reverse of gentlemanly, to say no-

thing else. But as I was saying, are there no other men besides these?"

"Oh, there are some of the married captains, but I see nothing of them."

"None amongst the bachelors?"

"There's Abbot, the adjutant, he doesn't go on as those men do certainly, but he's just on the same footing with them that I am; the only difference is, that he is adjutant, and high up in the regiment, and I am junior ensign."

"Nobody else? What kind of a man is the quarter master?"

"What Jerrold? Oh, he's a native, you know; never stirs out; stays at home and smokes a hookah all day; and so there's only Empson."

"Well, what kind of a man is Empson? He's that white-haired, sickly-looking fellow, is not he?"

"Yes; senior ensign,—been out three years; well, you know, that fellow is a complete methodist,—goes to the dissenting chapel here every evening. I don't know that he ever speaks to any one in the regiment. All the rest are the fellows in the mess."

"Rather a gloomy prospect for you certainly: do you ever think of exchanging?"

"Not I;—always stick to the corps you're posted to. But are you going to write your overlanders this morning, because I must? I certainly

do agree with you as to the way men talk of home," he added, as he sat down to write; "do you care very much about the overlands?"

"I don't think I could live in this country without them."

"By Jove! I'm glad of that; where do you come from?"

"Cumberland; were you ever in the Lakes?"

"No, I'm a Suffolk walla. Do you know Yoxton?"

"Can't say I do."

"Such a jolly place; first-rate shooting, and beautiful country, with the coast five miles off. Oh, what would not I give to be there now!" The softening influence began to work: the hard-mannerism which had been so obvious while talking of his present, vanished before the gentle recollection of the different past; the enthusiasm which home can inspire, even for the dulness of Suffolk, was in his tone; poor nature, so far banished from his daily life, might be almost seen stealing over his face, as he gave way to the thought of his mother and sisters; he felt a glowing kindliness towards Oakfield, who had sympathised with him in his one great pure pleasure; he had found at least one in whose opinion, even though the opinion of a griff, he felt, he knew not why, a strange confidence; who was not

ashamed to say that he cared for his home, and thought overland letters the greatest pleasure in life. He sat down and wrote a long letter, describing to his mother his new chum. Oh! so wonderfully unlike his conversation an hour before was the tone of his letter, speaking with open, frank, boyish enthusiasm, of Oakfield's good looks, of his manliness, and how different he was from the other officers; and yet that night he was listening like a disciple to Cade, and did not say a word when Oakfield was declared to be a "supercilious griff, who thought a devil of a deal too much of himself on the strength of his whiskers."

Meanwhile Oakfield was much impressed by this short conversation; he felt great pity for poor Vernon, left so entirely without support; without, as it seemed, any choice of companions, to make his way through life from evil to good; and though he felt little able to help others while so much in need of help himself, he yet determined, so long as he remained in the 81st, to do what he could to assist Vernon, to recall him, if possible, to that truer sense of right and wrong, which was becoming obliterated by the low standard of all around him. And for himself, the companionship of one who had still something of the freshness and simplicity of boyhood, so long retained by those who are brought up at home, would be, he

felt sure, softening and humanising; unable indeed to supply all the want he felt, to aid him in reconciling the difference between his faith and his circumstances, which so perplexed him; but drawing him out of himself, and dissipating that cloud of morbid self-torment which so often settles upon a solitary man. The first common chord struck between them was home; poor Arthur became a child while unbosoming himself to his ready listener, about his mother and two little sisters; and above all, about the pet of the family,—Alfred, his youngest brother. Then Oakfield would speak of his own home, and would lament, as he looked over the dull, dusky, hazy plain, for his lake and mountains; and sometimes when in the rains the Ganges rolled down two miles in breadth, the two would stand in the dark evening, before going home to their late dinner, to admire the one beautiful sight which their dull world afforded,—dark moving water; sometimes, after a storm, rushing down with a roar and a volume awful to see and hear; at others, the dark water, stretching out beyond the horizon would make them fancy they were by the sea shore; and sometimes, when the moon was struggling with the clouds, and the great Ganges broke and rippled in the silvery light, Oakfield would be reminded of his own beloved Thirlwater. The Ganges was

their great friend; they rode by its banks in the morning, walked by it in the evening, or sometimes sailed on it, although native boat-building was not encouraging to a love of aquatics. Vernon withdrew more and more, almost unconsciously, from the intimacies into which he had as unconsciously grown. He still belonged to the mess, but he found the conversations, which he had so long listened to with indifference, becoming more painful to him, as they had been at first; the struggle to hold his own against the torrent of thoughtlessness and wickedness which swept by him, which had almost subsided into acquiescence, began to revive. There was nothing extraordinary in this: it was but the result of allowing the better and softer part of his nature sometimes to express themselves, not to die by continual suppression. Alas for the many in whom they do thus die! Alas for those who year by year come from home to India without even the experience of school or college life to assist them, are thrown into society, to the evil and low-principled tone of which no school or college furnishes a parallel; and, borne down, not only by the weight of superior age, but of military seniority, force back all ebullitions of tender feeling, learn to be ashamed of affection, ashamed of industry, ashamed of common honesty in money matters, ashamed even of professional

duty, ashamed of all that is softening, strengthening, humanising, till all that is noble in them shrinks and withers before the overbearing, coarse, animal, worldly existence which they obey;—which they obey till it enslaves them; and the boy of seventeen who suppressed love's workings, becomes the man of five and twenty who has no such workings to suppress: alas for the many, the chords of whose finer nature grow dumb from long silence, who never meet a friendly hand to strike them into life again!

CHAP. IV.

"'Look!' cries the world, 'so many rages lull'd,
So many fiery spirits quite cool'd down;
Look how so many valours, long undull'd,
After short commerce with me, fear my frown.
Thou, too, when thou against my crimes wouldst cry,
Let thy foreboded homage check thy tongue.'—
The world speaks well: yet might her foe reply—
'Are wills so weak? then let not mine wait long.
Hast thou so rare a poison? let me be
Keener to slay thee, lest thou poison me.'"

Empedocles on Etna, and other Poems, by A.

Oakfield was thoroughly glad that he had deserted his solitude; he liked Vernon more and more, and could not but feel happily conscious of the good influence he exercised over him, by recalling him to himself, and inducing him to believe that there was another standard of right and wrong, honour and dishonour, than that of his brother officers. Cade was rather a bore at times, when he brought his friends over from the billiard table to smoke, and drink brandy and water, and talk filthily in the veranda; on these occasions he always

retreated to his own room, or would go over to play billiards with Vernon. He had some difficulty as to his dealings with the Cade set, but much less than he would have had, had he belonged to the mess. Indeed, it must be allowed to Indian regimental blackguardism, that it is generally too indolent to proselytise; its tyranny is felt by those who make no effort to resist, but it is generally content to let quite alone those who do; so Oakfield was on perfectly civil terms with all the officers; talked with them when they met on parade and other public places, and otherwise saw very little of them. Not belonging to the regiment, it was much easier for him to keep aloof from company he was not inclined for, than for poor Vernon to break from it, though becoming every day more anxious to do so.

"Do you think, Oakfield, I ought to leave the mess?" Vernon asked one morning, as they were riding together along the river bank.

"I think it is a very hard matter to decide," said the other; "it was easy enough for me, because I do not belong to the corps, but in your case it is very different; a man certainly owes something to the regiment, and is under a *primâ facie* obligation to support its institutions, especially the most important one — the mess; but there are other obligations which quite outweigh this; you

see a man can do no possible good by going and living by himself, and if he thinks he may possibly in course of time make things better, by mixing freely in society, he ought perhaps to do so; unless he feels that it is certainly doing him more harm than he can ever hope to do it good; in that case he should of course quit it at once and entirely, which after all is not very difficult."

"Then why did you quit it, Oakfield; were you afraid of its doing you harm?"

"Why no; it seemed too disgusting to have much power of corruption in it; but I tell you,—being merely attached to the regiment for a few months, I felt at liberty to follow my own inclinations, which were to live quite by myself. Had I stayed in the mess, however, if I had felt myself becoming less sensitive, I should certainly have concluded that I was becoming contaminated, and, for my own safety's sake, have left it. But as to you, I wonder you make up your mind to stay in the regiment at all. Exchanging would be, I should fancy, the simplest way of settling the difficulty. There can't be many corps, saving your presence, like the 81st."

"Why, Oakfield, I have thought of it; but it's so awfully expensive, you see, going to another station and beginning all over again, paying new donations and so on; and after all perhaps I might

find other difficulties there as great or greater than I do here."

"That's very true; I believe you are right; and that I am too ready to look for relief to a change of circumstances. We shan't find any circumstances, I dare say, where it will be easy to do our duty; but still it is fearfully difficult here. Do you ever look forward, Vernon, and think what you are to do in after life?"

"I look forward to going home, I believe, more than anything else," he answered laughing.

"Well, well, so do I too, but what are we to do till then? march guards off?"

"Why not get an appointment?"

"Do you think that would be much of an improvement?"

"Why, everybody says so, at home as well as in this country?"

"I don't think that is sufficient recommendation; people at home know, I suspect, very little about the matter; and both at home and in this country they think a great deal more of allowances, and position, and so on, than anything else. But as to the duty we were talking of just now, do you think we should find that much easier on the staff than we do here; or mightn't we, as you said yourself, find difficulties there as great or greater than our present ones?"

"I dare say you would, but people don't generally consider an appointment in connection with duty, and that kind of thing."

"No, I believe you; they do not; because to most men the great objects in life are money or rank; and they call that position good in which they get much, and that bad in which they get little of these; but if I believe that the great object in life is to serve God, I shall think that position the best where I can most easily and most effectually do so, and I say is it easier on the staff than with a regiment?"

"Well, really, Oakfield, you must allow me to say that's a very original way of thinking of an appointment."

"Scarcely original; the New Testament, at least, has been before me; I know that to exclude the New Testament entirely from one's worldly affairs is the practice of the world, but this is what, please God, I will not do."

"You will have to live like Empson then, all by yourself, and keep separate from the world altogether."

"Possibly; and if the worst comes to the worst so it must be, but I hope otherwise as yet. I hope to live in the world, because I think we ought to do so. I doubt not Empson is a far better man than I am, but you see he does no good, and gets

harm, I fear, by separation from, just as others do in a different way by intimacy with, common society; I called on him the other day after hearing your description, but I fear we could not get on."

"Why not? he's not a very lively fellow certainly, but if you want a good man"—

"My dear Vernon, yes; I want a good man; but I want a hearty, and a kindly, and a sensible man. Poor Empson would drag all the world away to religion instead of bringing religion into the world. I had no more interest or sympathy in his conversation than in Cade's."

"Oh, Oakfield!"

"I hadn't, I assure you; he began telling me about some Exeter Hall meeting, and how some speaker had exposed some Puseyite clergyman, or something of that kind; and talked with great interest of the conflicts of different sects, and of the gradual triumph of Exeter Hall; all which is not so gross, but just as dull, and I think as unprofitable, every bit, as Cade's discourses on his own performances."

"Did you tell him so?"

"I didn't hurt his feelings, I hope; I certainly did not pretend to take any great interest in the subject, and I fear he thought me little better than one of the wicked: no, Arthur, if I were to live a retired life apart from men, I should prefer the old

Roman Catholic line of saintliness, as more attractive and certainly more saintly, than what is, I fear, too often an almost fanatical partisanship; but my hope, my ambition is, to combine with a service of God predominant to all besides, manifest and uncompromising, a genial activity and a kindly intercourse with society. And to find a position in which to carry out this idea should be one's object, I think, in selecting a profession."

"Was it this then that made you come to India, because it was a queer place to fix upon?"

"You are chaffing, Master Arthur, and perhaps you have good reason; I shan't answer that question;— the question now is, being in India, what to do?"

"Get out of it again."

"Many a true word spoken in jest, youngster: I think I shall get out of it."

"Nonsense, Oakfield, you're not serious."

"Only half," said the other; "what do you say to coming to New Zealand, and cutting the service?"

By this time they had regained cantonments, and inquired at the post-office for letters.

"By Jove! here's one from Stanton," exclaimed Oakfield. "Come along, Arthur, let's get home;" so they galloped off.

Stanton's letter was as follows:—

"My Dear Oakfield,

"I was not the least surprised when I received your philippic; I had expected it. I grant that the first feeling of a thoughtful, nay, of a gentlemanly man, thrown into Indian, bachelor, military society, is likely to be disgust,—but this cannot last. It is neither possible, nor at all desirable to be living all one's days in a state of abhorrence from what is passing round us; we must round our corners off somehow to fit into the state of things which we find, and which all our angularity will not alter. Now don't fly off and say that is low-principled, and an unworthy accommodation with evil; *experto crede*, or if you won't trust at least hear. I have been more or less a solitary being ever since I was born. I had no brothers and sisters, so I grew up at first alone; and then I was at Eton what is called in a boy—shy; quietly jogged on my own ways, as a great many in a large school do, neither bullied nor petted, but just let alone; indeed, came far less in contact with other fellows there than many, with their queer notions of public schools, would think possible. It was the same at Addiscombe.* I have, as you know, somewhat a phlegmatic disposition which happily preserved me from the abominations of that abominable place; I knew one or two quiet men, and I know them in this

* Addiscombe has the credit, we believe deservedly, of being an altered place since Stanton wrote.

country now. We read fairly and got the artillery, owing nothing to Addiscombe, which is a place we all hate cordially, but then we were all public school men. When I came out here, I might have had society enough if I had liked it, and that far more attractive than what you describe at Hajeepoor. The Dum Dum mess is pretty much what you say you expected to find every mess; and the artillery, especially the mounted branch, is, I honestly think, the best arm in the service for officers. But I did not seek society, still less did it seek me; neither however did I avoid it. My principal interests were certainly altogether independent of it, but I did not feel called upon to wage war with it. I was, as I am, immensely fond of riding, but had not the least predilection for the turf; and though a sportsman by taste and home training, I did not fall in with the gambling, drinking, buying and selling lot, who called themselves by that name. In fact, I lived very much alone, because I had been used to do so, on very civil terms with all the society of the place; but seeing little of it, and to tell you the truth, thinking very little whether it was good or bad. All this time you must recollect I was a mere boy. As I grew older, I certainly wished to find at least one or two personal friends, but *Dis aliter visum:* one grows up with or stumbles upon a friend, does not find him out by searching. Till I came out this time, and made your acquaintance, I had not a friend in the country. Of course I did not like India, nobody does. People who ship their sons off to India every

day, little think to what a blighted life they are sending them. I have always a profound pity for a griff; I am sure most of them are miserable; that the quantity of silent sorrow which they gulp down in that first year is very pitiable. It makes them men, but what kind of men we will not say. God help the present generation of them!—not that I was actually wretched, but only not at all happy: with all my sensations in that respect humbled. So it is with almost all; it is the curse of this country, brought on very considerably by climate, partly also by other causes. The hot dull vacancy of Indian life is grievous to all. Men try to evade it in many ways,—some by the excitement of work, and these are perhaps best off; and yet you would call them active or useful or perhaps brilliant rather than happy. Sometimes they are good men, but, with very few exceptions, too feverish minded to be happy. Others, by the excitement of drink, —poor feeble ones! deserving not of less contempt, but of more pity than they get, — these quickly hurry through their half hours of ecstacy and weeks of awful despondency, to delirium tremens and the burying ground. But far the greatest number seek relief in the petty dissipations of society; these are the men who drink, but are not drunkards,—bet and play cards and billiards, but do not gamble ruinously; and eat and drink and sleep and gossip and shilly shally through their day; trying, with all the singleness of purpose they possess, to steer a dexterous course between the burden of exertion on the one hand,

and the vacuum of literally doing nothing on the other. This is the great bulk of Indian society,—more or less vicious at different times and places (you appear to have found an unfavourable specimen), but always shallow, empty, contemptible. I had sense enough to perceive that the remedies people tried against dulness were worse than the disease; the first, indeed, I have had no opportunity of trying; my interest got me into the horse artillery and stopped. I think I should like regular work, though I should certainly dread the bustle and disquiet with which I see it generally accompanied. But still the disease is painful, and as I tell you, a life of perpetual dulness without the pleasing safe excitement of friendly intercourse, deadens one's happy sensibilities. The more my mind ripened, the more it was driven in upon itself. The civil, indifferent footing with other men upon which I found myself by habit and natural temperament, corresponded well enough with my wakening sense of my position in life. It was clear that my lot was to be a solitary one, that the line of my duties would give me no standing ground from which to influence society, and, therefore, I might let it alone, not protesting against evil, which I neither could nor should ever diminish; in short, taking care of myself, and leaving the world to take care of itself. This sounds selfish, but I do not think it is so really. After all, every man's first business is and must be to take care of himself; there are some who while doing this are led naturally in the line of their duty to reprove, and perhaps separate them-

selves from the world by a visible line of demarcation; but depend upon it, the majority of us do no good to ourselves or others by such conduct; we must do our own work, have our own interests, cultivate our own affections, only regretting that they find no immediate object; we may practically be apart from the world, — nay, we must deny it our real or professed sympathy, but we shall gain nothing, and perhaps lose much, by a flagrant breach leading to no result. So I took to books, and lived for seven years with unseen friends. I went through the ordinary duties and courtesies of life, nor do I think that this, in any way, impaired the sincerity with which I devoted myself to the safest of all pleasures — literature; those wide Elysian fields, where you may wander on with all great and true souls, — with none to interfere with you, with no mist of form or prejudice, or compromise, to stand between the theory and the practice of life. So I lived for seven years; not very happily I tell you, because a life utterly free from excitement is not a happy one; and besides this, though thinking was, I believe, the best work open to me, we all have a consciousness that 'to do is nobler than to think.' If you see your line of action then *do* in God's name. If you feel yourself prepared for a crusade against the interminable falseness of society, I shall bid you God speed, not the least expecting you to be successful, but believing that you will be a glorious gainer by the effort, and that perhaps the cause itself will be the stronger for a victim; but do not begin unless you are prepared to

go on; to buzz about the complicated social falsehood —accusing here, and giving in there, speaking stern truth to one lie, and trying to get over another by fair words, will only be irritating to others and perplexing to yourself. I doubt whether your ambition, nay, I candidly tell you, I doubt whether your strength and courage will carry you to the length which can alone justify, or at least compensate for an attack. It is superfluous to say, 'Do not join yourself to society;' but still, unless you feel prepared for an almost apostolical labour, I should say, do not altogether sever yourself from it. I dare say the Hindustanee and the appointment will not do you much good, and that you would feel as little inclined to join yourself heartily to the world in its higher, more refined, and intellectual, but still worldly phrase, than to the lower one,—to regimental tittle tattle. I agree with you that we have fallen upon evil times, in an evil land. At home, in the great question of social relationship between the higher and lower classes, and God *versus* Mammon, good and evil, seem again to be declaring themselves with some distinctness, but here, unfortunately, we are all higher classes together; and Mammon has hitherto had it all his own way. Make up your mind for a dull, self-teaching life; it is grievous, I dare say, to be asked, at twenty-one, to sit down and let the battle of life be fought without you; you must fight it in your own heart, and by the time you have been ten years in India, and have become a prematurely old man of thirty, with the spring taken out of

you, you will find that quite enough. I hope to see you in a few weeks. I am ordered to join a troop at Meerut, and shall go up by steamer to Allahabad. I will let you know when I am coming.

"Ever, dear Oakfield,
"Your attached friend,
"H. STANTON."

About a month after Oakfield received this letter, he got another, telling him of the day on which his friend expected to be at Hajeepoor, by steamer. Steamers on the Ganges and the great trunk road are the two most palpable marks, we had almost said the only two, of British civilisation in India, — the former especially; the steam navigation of the Ganges has been a boon, second only to that priceless one, the overland communication with England. It was at six o'clock, on a beautiful October morning, when Oakfield heard that an "Agin boat"* was in sight. He rode down to the ghat with Vernon, and there sure enough he saw the "Lord William Bentinck" steamer, with the clumsy, unsightly, passenger *flat* in tow, panting up the middle of the river, seeming to make little progress against the rushing volume of water, swollen by the scarcely departed rainy season. There is little of the life and bustle of an

* The natives call a steam boat "agin boat."

English quay to be seen at an Indian *ghat.** One or two anxious to catch a glimpse of some friend in his way up country; a few native merchants and agents waiting to receive their goods from Calcutta; a few landing-place native officials, with their red cloth shoulder-belts and brass breast-plates, the invariable uniform of an Indian "*Chaprassey*,"—these formed the whole assemblage, with the occasional exception of some officer, stopping, as he passed by, returning from his morning ride, "just to have a dekh† at the steamer," the one mild unexciting break in the dull round of Hajeepoor monotony. After divers shouts of "back her," and "stop her," and "ease her,"—queer Thames-like cries, sounding in the Indian October morning, the steamer (a specimen of the useful in naval architecture, in its most intense opposition to the beautiful) was fastened to the bank, and in a few moments Stanton and Oakfield had shaken hands.

"Well," said the former, "you don't look much the worse for your first hot weather."

"No; indeed I think the climate about the only evil in India which is not so bad as it is said to be."

"Ah! you'll think differently your second sea-

* The native word for a ferry, or landing-place.

† *Anglicè*—a look, a sight.

son," said Vernon, with the Job's comforting superiority of a comparatively old Indian. "I've felt it twice as much this year as I did last."

"I shouldn't think you had had much to complain of this year either," said Stanton, with the politeness of a five minutes' acquaintance.

"I don't know, I feel awfully seedy sometimes," replied Vernon, rather despondingly.

Stanton looked at him more attentively, and was struck with the fragile delicacy of his appearance.

"How are you travelling, Oakfield,—got a horse for me?"

"Of course: here Syce!" And so they rode home, glad to get out of the eight o'clock sun, which was painful even in October.

"You are going to stay here, I hope, Stanton,—not going on by the steamer?"

"No; I intend to inflict myself upon you, if you can put me up, till the next steamer comes up."

"Of course; you won't mind sleeping in a tent; the nights are perfectly cool now, and we can dine together in my room."

"I hope," said Vernon, "Mr. Stanton will dine with me at mess to-night; it's a public night."

"I shall be very happy."

"Nonsense, Vernon!" Oakfield exclaimed; "You come and dine here till Stanton goes; I'm

not going to allow him to be taken away to mess the first day he's here."

"It won't be taking him away; of course you'll come too."

"Of course I'll not; you know I never dine at the mess; besides, you wouldn't like it yourself, Stanton, I know."

"Thank you," said Stanton, smiling, "I shall be very happy to dine at the 81st mess: oh, come along, Oakfield, remember what I told you."

"I remember very well, but it's rather a cool way of making me act upon it, whether I agree or not. No, you and Arthur go and dine at the mess. I forgive him for asking you, on condition you both let me off."

But they would not let him off; so at last he consented. After accepting the invitation Oakfield kept regretting the whole day that he had done so. For the last four months he had been quite exempt from the unpleasantnesses to which he was again about to expose himself.

"It's all very well," he thought, "for Stanton to talk of the fruitlessness of objecting in one point unless I object in all; it's not a matter of objecting; the thing is, am I bound, or have I a right to sit still and hear in silence all that I have every reason to expect I shall hear? As to irritating people, keeping aloof from them is far less likely to

do so, I should think, than going amongst them and sitting silent, and looking disgusted. And yet I cannot by possibility look otherwise if Cade comes out in the style I have sometimes heard him. I shall like to see how Stanton manages, too; and, besides, I owe something to Vernon; he has made such immense concessions already that I shouldn't like to appear exacting or absurdly fastidious to him. I wonder how Stanton manages."

So he made up his mind to go and make the best of it, hoping that after all it would be better than he expected,—that the 81st would have more respect for common decency on a public night than on ordinary occasions.

Stanton, Oakfield, and Vernon, rode together up the course that evening;—three men as different in appearance and in character as are often seen anywhere. Stanton, far the oldest looking of the party,—far the most mannish in his figure, with small eyes, regular features, and placid expression, singularly placid and immoveable, stolid and cold you would say till you knew him, and found what sparks of wit flashed out of that solidity—what a warm loving heart lay under his absent, dreamy, speculative habit. In intensest contrast with him, young Vernon, with his bright colour—his sparkling eye—his delicately marked features, full of life;—but, alas! full of death

also; — that fragile beauty of complexion and outward comeliness, which so inevitably suggests the thought of decay and early death. Between the two rode Oakfield, looking neither old nor young; perhaps an old mind, — a mind forced into growth by education and circumstances, struggling with a young body for supremacy; his soft black hair parting almost equally on either side of his head, giving a soft tone to his smooth, earnest features, while his large dark eyes, contrasting with his pale face, gave him an appearance of almost sorrowful thoughtfulness. He led the others, they hardly knew why. It was, indeed, nothing but the force of earnestness. He had been from his childhood, — rare blessing! — accustomed to find those around him in earnest; and this influence had made itself felt; and now, even in the opening of youthful manhood, he found himself closely questioning life, asking eternal reasons for what he should do in time. He was an earnest man, — and he was a Christian man. Alas, that the two should be so often severed! Alas, that the long folly of those "who profess and call themselves Christians," should have done its best to divorce Christianity from wisdom! that so many true and eager hearts, seeing, as they thought, Christianity intimately leagued with sectarianism and narrow-minded dogmatism, should have thought it needful to renounce

it as the first step towards freedom and truth! Alas, that we should now find, to our cost, that Christianity, the new religion, the religion of all times and places, the religion beyond sects and creeds, should be in danger of confounding itself with things old and ready to vanish away, when it should be hailing as its own true offspring, lending sanctification and divine light to whatsoever things are loving, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are true.

The evening promenade is the one event of the day, to an Indian community, in the hot weather, and not a very exciting one either. The great thing is to get air, after the close confinement to the house during the weary hours of sunshine; and to see other faces than that of your wife or chum, as the case may be, which you have been shut up with all day. The first public work in a new cantonment, coeval with the barracks themselves, is the "course," or "mall," a long ugly line of driveable road, reclaimed from the sandy wilderness, about one and a half or two miles in length; and every night of the year do the same people, at the same hour, in the same costume, riding the same horses, driving the same buggies, jog at the same pace, up and down this same bit of straight road, in that business-like way which an Englishman retains in everything, even in

dancing; bowing to each other as they pass the *first* time, but at each subsequent time going by with studious indifference. In the hot months the intense oppression of the atmosphere, even after sunset, combines with the dull monotony of the business itself to impress it with a somewhat funereal aspect, which the blank, colourless costume, the white muslin dresses of the women, and white uniform jackets of the men, looking ghastly rather than cool, does not tend to relieve. But October is the blessed month of hope in India: then the morning and evening breezes begin to blow freshly, and as the days shorten, the air has time to cool before the sun comes back to heat it again; red jackets and coloured dresses succeed to the universal white: the delicious intoxication of fresh air makes sombre faces cheerful, and cheerful ones merry; horses, no less then men, feel the blessed influence, and you shall see staid quadrupeds dancing and kicking that you would have sworn a week ago had not a kick in them.

"What a jolly evening," Oakfield exclaimed, "and there's the moon rising; I vote we cut the mess and go for a ride."

"Thank you," said Stanton, "I want my dinner, and it's time to go there too, I fancy; there's not a soul but ourselves on the course."

They galloped back to the mess, where a large

party had already assembled and were standing round a table in a small ante-room, talking and drinking sherry. Oakfield spoke to one or two whom he knew amongst the red-coated throng of men, all looking very like each other, with here and there the blue-jacket of an artilleryman; and, more broadly distinguished still, a solitary, black-coated civilian, looking quiet and gentlemanly,—as a decently-dressed civilian in a red crowd always does.

"There's the second bugle; come along!" shouted Cade; and the party moved bodily into the mess-room, and ranged themselves, about forty in number, down the long table, while their forty several khidmutgars rushed simultaneously at the soup.

A large dinner at a Native Infantry mess, at least in the Bengal Presidency (they manage these things better, we are told, in Bombay and Madras), is not a beautiful sight. It would kill Soyer. The table on such occasions furnishes an exact image of the native impression as to English taste and appetite. An absurd profusion of boiled and roasted flesh is a "burra khana," great dinner. The mess-khansamah is told that there is to be a large party, and there must be a good dinner; he multiplies quantity up to his idea of good, and the result is a display of "plain roast

and boiled," that would gratify any old gentleman of wholesome anti-French kickshaw taste, as to quality, however it might stagger him in quantity. Those innocent people who read of mess dinners given by crack corps at home, the magnificent display of regimental plate and so on, would stare at the miscellaneous medley of silver, german-silver, electro-plate, and crockery and glass of all sorts, sizes, and colours; for a good many messes (and the 81st was about the worst in the service) have no other property than a table, a few chairs, and a good deal of beer,—and every man sends his own plates, glasses, &c. As to company and conversation, the uninitiated would probably not expect very much, and therefore be less disappointed: it is questionable, indeed, whether the wretched, half-sporting, half-fashionable, all-silly and consequential gossip, which Lever and other writers like him have popularised as the idea of mess conversation in the royal army, is not even more contemptible than the undisguised coarseness and hearty blackguardism of the 81st. Vernon sat in the approved host fashion, with a guest on either hand, and Oakfield was not sorry to find his neighbour on the other side the civilian. Civilians have some undeniable advantages over officers of the other service. They come out on an average three years later, mix more in women's society,

and what brains they have are not allowed to lie utterly unemployed. Mr. Broke had been at Cambridge, so he and Oakfield had a little university shop; then Oakfield asked him how he liked the country and his magisterial work. He hated the former and apparently took very little interest in the latter,—went off to Hajeepoor parties and young ladies,—spoke of these last with less coarseness, perhaps, but the same freedom which had so horrified Oakfield in the officers of the 81st. He was, in fact, a very commonplace young gentleman, but he *was* a gentleman in appearance and manner, and Oakfield inwardly acknowledged that even this was a greater point than he would have allowed it to be six months back. Around him rose and fell the roar of 81st mess-table small talk, and those who listened might hear Smith's plucky proposal to run his notable tat* "Pickles" against Brown's hitherto unvanquished "Devil's Dust," for a mile and a half, owners up, for ten gold mohurs†; or how Walker "backed himself to drink six bottles of beer and walk home after it." While the uninitiated might gaze in speechless wonder at Cade, as he related, with all the conscious glow of good fellowship, how

* Tat—short for Tattoa;—*Anglicè*, pony.

† A gold mohur is an amount, not a coin, at least not one in circulation; it is equivalent to sixteen rupees.

at the Court of Requests the previous day (before which, by the bye, he had only escaped being brought as a defendant by being named as a judge) "he had stuck out like bricks for poor old Pringles of ours, and had ultimately succeeded in *doing* that damned Sadangor* Nubbee Bux." So the dinner passed off, and by the time the curry and rice was disposed of, the cloth off the table, and cheroots lighted, Oakfield, who had exhausted his civilian neighbour, and who observed that Cade and Co. were getting very boisterous, was anxious to decamp.

"How long is one expected to stay?" he asked of Vernon, who had been talking busily to Stanton all dinner-time.

"Oh, not long; just wait a quarter of an hour, or so, and we'll come with you. Oh, by Jove, what a bore!"

This last exclamation was caused by somebody's shouting out—"I say, Cade, give us a song."

"Not yet, not yet," Vernon said, only half aloud, and colouring violently.

"And why not yet, youngster?" asked Cade, turning sharp upon him; "have you any particular objection?"

"Oh no; I only thought it rather early to begin."

Anglicè, tradesman.

Cade looked angrily at him; he knew what he was afraid of, and determined that he should not be disappointed. He then looked hard at Oakfield, but could make nothing out of his face, which was perfectly undisturbed. Oakfield was really extremely uneasy; he knew of what style Cade's performance was likely to be, and he felt for poor Vernon's evident distress at having brought him into an unpleasant position.

"Upon my honour, Oakfield, I had no idea of anything of this kind; I thought we should have left long before the singing began; I am really very sorry."

"Don't distress yourself, old boy; it's not the least your fault; you did all you could to stop it, and did it very pluckily, too, for the junior officer of the corps present. After all, I dare say Abbot there won't allow anything very gross with all these guests here."

"Abbot! bless you, he doesn't care: I only hope that it will pass off, and that Cade won't sing; it's all up if he does; I don't believe he knows two lines of anything decent. Confound it! there's Smith asking him again, and he'll do it, I know, because of you; I'm very sorry, Oakfield; what shall you do? you can't go just as he begins."

"Don't you distress yourself, I tell you, my dear fellow; you attend to Stanton, I don't know what

he will do; there he is, talking away, and doesn't know apparently what's coming; but I fancy he'll stay here, and you must stay with him; there's no occasion for my remaining, and I won't hear again what I heard once at this table; but mind, Vernon, however unpleasant this may be, I fully acknowledge you did all you possibly could to stop it."

This passed between them while the hum was still going on, lessening as Cade took counsel as to what he should sing, — giving and receiving suggestions very ominous as to what was to follow. At last he broke out, and at the end of the first verse Oakfield tapped Vernon quietly on the shoulder, got up, and left the room. He did it as gently as he could, but it was impossible but that it should have the appearance of a marked action. Cade stopped short, looked at Vernon, and said, with a coarse, insulting laugh, "Your friend's gone home early, youngster," and resumed his brutality.

Poor Vernon sat on thorns, and would have given worlds to follow Oakfield. The fear which would have restrained him two months ago was completely gone; he felt angry with himself, — most unjustly, poor boy, — for having brought his friend against his will, and forced him into so unpleasant a proceeding; he himself was horrified by the hideous sounds which he could not help hearing; he would have given anything to go, but

when he looked at Stanton, he saw him with his eyes cast down, looking grave, disgusted, but immoveable. In the applauding hubbub that followed the close of the obscenity, there was a pretty general break-up and adjournment to the billiard-room.

"Shall we go?" said Stanton.

"I'm quite ready; I really owe you an apology for bringing you here: I assure you I never knew such a thing occur before, at least so soon after dinner, and with guests present."

"Well," said Stanton, "I tell you candidly that I never heard anything so bad before, and I have dined at a good many messes in my time. The seniors of your corps, who were present, must be great blackguards or great cowards. I saw how uneasy you were, and was very sorry for you; but if you once find yourself let in for a thing of that kind, the only plan is to sit still, and take the first opportunity of getting away. Master Oakfield was wrong, and I shall tell him so."

"Poor dear Oakfield! I think he was quite right, I do declare, and I like him better than ever for it."

Stanton made no answer to this, but only told Vernon "he was a very good fellow." He himself thought no better of the business than Oakfield, though perhaps he was less acutely pained by it;

but he had been long accustomed, on principle as well as in practice, to avoid in the first instance any such unpleasant circumstances, or, if he unfortunately came in the way of them, to submit in silence and get out of them as fast as he could. "I take my own way," he would say, "and the blackguards must take theirs; I shall do no good by fighting with them, so the best thing, if we come in contact, is to sheer off again the best and soonest we can." But he had far too great regard for the conscience of a young boy to urge his theory upon him; "it does very well for me," he thought, "but might only serve as a cloak of cowardice to him." Perhaps Stanton hardly knew how much cowardice in his own case, or if not cowardice, indolence, lay hid under the guise of this philosophy, falsely so called. "Have you parade in the morning?" he asked, changing the subject.

"No; Oakfield and I were going out for a ride: will you come?"

"To be sure: tell your bearer, please, to call me at gun-fire. Good night."

CHAP. V.

" How little, then,
Submission costs.
It costs no gold, no sweat
Of brow, no toil of limb. It costs the Man.
What is man without conscience ? "

STRATHMORE.

IT was a delicious morning, a distinctly cool breeze, so refreshing after the graduated temperature of hot, tepid, and questionable winds; and the dawn was glorious as it stole over that cloudless sky, over the calm, cool, boundless plain, over that huge, white-sanded river. The clear fresh morning was not the time for unpleasant questions; they talked of home. Oakfield compared the present with the corresponding time a year ago, when he was going up to Oxford for his last undergraduate term, and expecting his degree examination, — whereas now he was riding by the Ganges, in Bahar, expecting his posting. Stanton tried to recollect where he must have been that time a year ago, and came to the conclusion that he must have been shooting in the Highlands.

" Well," said Vernon, " I was at Hajeepoor, and uncommonly wretched I was."

"It is a wretched time the first few months, certainly," said Stanton; "how little people at home know or care, what a quantity of unhappiness is shipped off to this country every month. They talk of the Anglo-Indian Empire, and the fortunate young lads who get into that glorious service; but they forget that a life of exile is still a life of exile, and as such, to all but the most insensible, more or less a life of pain; they forget, or do not care to know, what a tragedy almost every one of those fortunate lads goes through; tragedies not the less painful because they are for the most part dull and unexciting; and, often too, unwitnessed and unsympathised with."

"Not the less painful either," said Oakfield, "because often lying side by side with the broadest farce."

"True for you, Oakfield; and which," he added, after a pause, as if determined to bring on the subject whether it fitted or not, "which should you call last night's performance, tragedy or farce?"

"Neither," said Oakfield, gravely. "Neither impressively wicked nor coarsely amusing; but simply revolting, and nothing else."

"You are hardly qualified to judge, for you did not hear it out."

"No, I heard quite enough, come, I know

what you are driving at; you want to question the propriety of what I did last night. I knew I should have to fight with you about it."

"Why yes, I certainly think you made a mistake; you gave, of course, great offence, and as far as I see gained nothing by it."

"I don't see why I am bound to prove that I do gain anything by it; it is enough that I felt no obligation to remain where I was, and that it would have been very unpleasant to do so. I do not say that is my only ground; but even that I think is enough."

"Hardly," replied Stanton, "for I think there *was* an obligation. Of course to hear that man Cade, or whatever you call him, making a beast of himself, was very unpleasant, as you say; but do you think you had a right to rebuke him by an open expression of disgust and disapproval? It is very lamentable that men should say or do offensive things, but if every one who did, was to be reproved openly, we should be in perpetual hot water."

"You are too vague, Stanton, in your expressions; I do not the least claim the right, nor have I any desire, to rebuke every man who offends in conversation; but I consider this of Cade's as a particular case. I do not think gentlemen have any right to countenance anything so gross and so wicked even by their presence."

"No; and therefore they will do well to keep

out of the way of places and persons where they know this style of thing goes on."

"I agree with you," Oakfield interrupted, "and therefore I wished, as you know, not to go to mess; but having gone, and being present, there was no alternative left me. We do little enough, God knows, in protesting against evil; I am sure we ought not to concede an inch of the ground we have: even society repudiates evil in such a gross and palpable form as that; and though I do not say that evil is more deserving of tolerance in its more refined guise, yet I do say that in whatever form it is excluded, even though on low and unworthy grounds, we are the gainers by its exclusion, and gain nothing by admitting it. Speaking to you I would not mind saying that I think a man is bound to mark his abhorrence of sin, especially in its worst and most loathsome shape, far more pointedly than we most of us are in the habit of doing, provided of course that it be done wisely and sincerely, not foolishly and conceitedly. But on lower grounds I consider that what I did was perfectly defensible. Even the gentlemanly standard, false as it is in many respects, and in all so far inferior to the Christian standard from which it is so unhappily divorced, does not admit of such blackguardism as that of last night. In a party of English gentlemen at home, even of young men,

I say confidently, judging from my own university experience, Cade dared not have done what he did last night, or would have been scouted with contempt and indignation had he attempted it. Of the Queen's army I am less qualified to speak; perhaps too out here the Queen's regiments become Indianised, but I don't believe that such a thing would be allowed at the mess of a good regiment, even in this service. I do trust that all corps are not like the 81st, are they?"

"No," said Stanton, "though it's rather cool of me to say so before Vernon; but I told him last night that I never saw anything so disreputable as the whole affair: the mess, the conversation, the whole turn out was disgraceful. The Indian army is bad in this respect certainly, but I trust there are very few messes where you would see or hear anything at all like last night. If I were you, Vernon, being junior Ensign, and all things considered, I should exchange."

"So I intend to: I shall wait till you are posted, Oakfield, and then apply for the first vacancy in your regiment."

"Do, old fellow," said Oakfield, "that will be very jolly; we'll chum together."

"Well, but Oakfield, about what we were saying," Stanton began.

"No, never mind what we were saying; it's no

good discussing it; I see where we differ, and we are not likely to agree. You think it's no good quarrelling with what we can't mend. I say I quarrel not to mend, but to take care of myself and to discharge a duty. I say at any rate, do not give evil more tether than the world, that is the respectable, shabby-genteel world, gives it. A gentlemanly standard is not much to establish or to insist upon, but it is a good deal better than nothing. But I so far agree with you that anything likely to irritate others, without doing them good, is to be avoided, so I hope to be more careful for the future, not to get into a position where to irritate becomes necessary; though I shall live for the present in hope, that having seen what you admit to be the worst possible specimen of Indian society, the next and more favourable ones will make such contingencies less likely to occur. But it's getting hot, and, Vernon, you don't look well; let's get home."

When they reached the bungalow they found that Cade was, as usual, breakfasting out; this was a relief, for the meeting was sure to be awkward after what had happened, and both Oakfield and Vernon felt that it would very possibly be unpleasant for them to continue their present arrangement of chumming any longer. That night Oakfield and Stanton dined at home, but Vernon

would not be persuaded to join them, but went to mess as usual. His friends were surprised, but he refused to stay so decidedly that they forbore to urge him. The fact was that Vernon knowing how unpopular Oakfield already was, and how liberally his proceedings of the previous night were certain to be abused; feeling too some compunction for having, on one or two former occasions, allowed his friend to be ill spoken of without vindicating him, resolved now to go and bear the brunt of Cade's wrath, and the general dislike, though his delicate nature shrank from the prospect of a scene which he foresaw was only too likely to be the result. The poor boy thus gallantly resolved to stand up for the friend whom he had got to regard with that intense affection into which the friendships of boys or very young men often ripen (as is so admirably depicted by Disraeli in Coningsby), was at the same time conscious that tact and temper were no less requisite than firmness, and it was with his usual friendly face and tone, though perhaps with a flushed complexion, that he took his place at the mess table. There was hardly a word spoken for some time; Vernon made some commonplace observation, but was coldly answered. At last Cade, as if determined to commence operations, turned abruptly towards Abbot, the adjutant, who sat opposite to him, and

said: "Well, what did you think of the griff's manner last night?"

"Think! there can't be two opinions about it. I only wish it had occurred before the young gentleman had passed his drill."

"I think," said Ensign Smith, sententiously, "that it was a personal insult to Cade; upon my honour, Cade, you ought to make him explain."

"Why you see, Smith," replied the great man, with an air of injured virtue, "it is not the insult to myself I so much mind; of course if any man insults me I know what to do; but I feel for the honour of the mess; I look upon Mr. Oakfield's impertinence as an insult to the officers of the regiment, and the regiment, in my opinion, should resent it."

"How do you mean?" said Abbot; "you can't well hand him up for it."

"Oh, damn handing up; you always stick to the shop side of matters; no, I think it should be intimated to him by Abbot, as the senior officer present, that the mess expect an apology, and if he refuses to give it, the officers of the regiment will decline his further acquaintance."

"There's hardly any one speaks to him now," said Smith.

"Oh yes, there are some," said Cade, looking at Vernon.

"If you mean me," Vernon said, "I tell you fairly I hope to continue to have the pleasure of Oakfield's acquaintance as long as he remains in the corps."

"Oh, indeed; perhaps you won't find it pleasant remaining in the corps yourself in that case, my young fellow. I tell you what," Cade added, violently losing his temper more and more, "we've stood a great deal too much of this nonsense; one griff giving himself airs, and another backing him up."

"Gently, gently," interposed Abbot, who was useful as still retaining an official conscience and sense of propriety, and knew that however allowable ribaldry and blasphemy might be, quarrelling at a mess table was not "regulation," and who knew also that if Cade once began inveighing, he would soon commit himself and become abusive; "gently, Cade; draw it mild."

"I shall not give Mr. Cade the opportunity of insulting me," Vernon said, making a movement as if to leave the table; "I believe I sufficiently understand the hints which I have heard from others as well as him to-night, to make it clear that this is not a place for me; I only say that I think if anybody has a right to complain it is I; that I brought a guest to dinner on a public night, who was forced, you know how, to leave the

table; and depend upon it if there is a row, and this comes to the commanding officer's notice, it is quite impossible that *I* should get the worst of it."

He said this civilly, but with a firmness so different from the quiet, almost childish submission which his companions had been accustomed to see in him, that they were moved with surprise, though not in the least with admiration. It is a painful fact; but those who heard him were literally incapable of admiring moral courage, — they did not know what it meant; had he sworn and swaggered and offered to give Cade any satisfaction he liked, and all that sort of thing, it is possible that Smith and Brown would with a complacent candour have owned that though he had made a fool of himself about Oakfield, he was a plucky fellow all the same; but a quiet gentlemanly courage was not in their line, — they could not admire because they could not understand it.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Abbot, as Vernon left the room. "Well, Smith, what do you think of that?"

"Infernal young humbug! Well, we've got rid of him that's one thing."

"And a devilish good riddance too," chimed in Brown. "Eh, Cade?"

"Yes," said Cade, with a comical maudlin sentimentality; "and yet he wasn't a bad fellow either, till that snob Oakfield spoiled him."

CHAP. VI.

"True to the mark
They stem the current of that perilous gorge,
Their arms still strengthening with the strengthening heart."

. WORDSWORTH.

THERE is a great repose in being cut! While you are "on terms" with a man, as it is called, you may be in constant hot water, half quarrelling a dozen times a day; but once break or be broken with him, and you are at once sheltered by the "courtesies of society." Let two men who have been living cat and dog for a month, once fairly cut each other, and it is surprising how civil they become. If ever they have to transact business, it is done by studiously courteous notes, or if a personal interview becomes necessary, there is such a mutual be-mistering or be-captaining, and such an intensity of scraping and bowing politeness between them, that a stranger might set them down as capital friends in the Sir C. Grandison's style. So Vernon found it with regard to Cade. He told Stanton what had passed, and was

greatly commended and supported by him; but Oakfield did not know till long afterwards how bravely his young friend had behaved. Vernon only said Cade was very angry with him for taking Oakfield's part, and they had had a row and were "cuts." Oakfield felt touched greatly by this even; he looked at the boy's gentle face and perceived how painful an effort it must have been to him, to maintain his ground against Cade's overbearing coarseness, but how deeply affected was he, when some months after he heard from Stanton of Vernon's resolute intention to go to mess, and there take upon himself the unpopularity and odium of defending his friend against all the officers, and of the firm, temperate, dignified manner in which he had carried out his purpose. Oakfield, however, knew enough to make him feel very grateful.

"I suppose, Arthur," he said, "I may conclude that if Cade has cut you he will *à fortiori* cut me, and in that case we had better look out for fresh quarters, because it will be awkward living in the same house with a man who won't speak to us. How shall we manage,—speak to Cade or write him a note?"

"Write him a note is the best plan, I think;—shall I write it?"

"No, no; let me write it."

So he wrote as follows:—

"My Dear Sir,

"As Mr. Vernon and myself propose occupying quarters together in another part of the station, we beg to request you will, if possible, get another officer to share this bungalow with you, from the first of next month, or earlier if you like.

"I remain,

"Yours truly,

"E. Oakfield."

This was addressed to "W. Cade, Esq." and sent over to Smith's bungalow, where he was breakfasting, as had been his custom now for several weeks.

Presently the following reply came directed with scrupulous formality to "Ensign E. Oakfield, B. A. doing duty with the 81st Regiment, N. I."

"Lieutenant Cade presents his compliments to Ensign Oakfield, and begs to inform him that Messrs. Smith and Brown will be happy to take possession any time after to-day of the rooms now occupied by Messrs. Oakfield and Vernon."

Now observe the convenience of the cutting system. This business would not have been transacted half so politely nor settled half so promptly had the parties been on speaking terms. So

Brown and Smith gave up their quarters in the large barrack square, and went to live with Cade; and Vernon and Oakfield moved into Brown and Smith's deserted habitation, taking their guest with them, who was as much pleased as anybody with the new arrangement. But happy as Stanton was in his friend's society, he was still anxiously looking out for the arrival of the steamer which might take him up to Allahabad, on his way to join his troop at Meerut. Already the storm which burst upon the north western frontier of India in the years 1845–6 seemed to be gathering; and although the secrets of the Lahore Durbar had not transpired, yet the belief was general that the Sikhs, who had been so long talked of, were now really coming; and Stanton well knew that if there was a campaign, every available troop of horse artillery would be ordered to the frontier. Meanwhile, Oakfield was expecting every day to hear of his being posted; so altogether they were an expectant household.

"Well, Oakfield! heard the news?" Vernon exclaimed as he came in from his ride one cool morning in the month of November; "come, get up you lazy dog."

"Oh!" groaned Oakfield, as he reluctantly roused himself from his prolonged slumber, "well —what is it? A steamer in?"

"No, not a steamer, only general orders, Unposted Ensign Edward Oakfield, B. A. doing duty with the 81st Regiment, N. I. to the 90th Regiment, N. I., at Meerut."

"No! is it really? By Jove!" With this somewhat unconnected exclamation he received the intelligence, and sank back on his pillow to think about it.

Posting is really a very great event to a man, almost as much so as the actual coming to India. It is a very exciting lottery, that chance of all the regiments in the army. And besides the excitement of chance, a regiment is a soldier's home as long as he remains in India. But it was not Oakfield's habit to say much, so Vernon soon left him and he remained thinking about it. At breakfast they all three met, and of course Oakfield's posting was discussed.

"You won't see the campaign," said Stanton, "if there is one. I hear this morning that the last rumour is, that the 90th are to be left to garrison Meerut."

"You are posted as fourth Ensign, Oakfield," said Vernon, "I shall send in my application for the vacancy at once."

"I think you are right, really," interrupted Stanton, "I've been in the country a good deal longer than you have, and I assure you that yours

is by far the worst corps I have seen. I do not know much about the 90th, I never met them. They have a good name, I believe; smart, crack, that sort of thing, rather given I fancy to pipe-clay and imitating the Queen's; but, you know one of their officers," nodding at Oakfield, "and he's not such a bad fellow, though he has foolish notions of his own."

"No," answered Vernon, "I've seen worse. Oh! I have made up my mind: I shall send in my application this morning. No, I shan't though; I've got to write overlanders. I say, Oakfield, your posting has just come in time."

"Yes, I was just thinking of that; but the post doesn't go out till four; you'll have plenty of time to come with me to the Brigadier's first. I want to speak to him about leaving this to join."

They called on the Brigadier, and Oakfield was desired to hold himself in readiness to proceed by the next available Government steamer. On enquiry, however, he found that for the next month or six weeks all the Government steamers would be engaged for troops, so he would probably have to wait some time longer at Hajeepoor. This was so far a disappointment that he had hoped to go on with Stanton; he consoled himself, however, with the reflection that in six weeks Vernon's exchange would perhaps be in orders, and he would have him

for a companion. Having completed his business he sat down to write his letter for the overland. It was to his sister Margaret that he felt most inclined to write on all important occasions; she was that truest of all friends, who had listened to him with all the admiring, sympathising, thoroughly unselfish interest, which is to be found in a sister, while he tried to explain to himself and to her the reason of his Indian migration,—who had been his companion and favourite all his life,—whom, notwithstanding the constant assurance that he ought to love all his dear brothers and sisters equally, he had from the first persisted in "liking best." Let this extract from his letter explain his view of his own position at this juncture:—

"A great event has happened this morning. My posting, which has formed the immediate horizon of my anticipations for the last seven months, is in to-day's orders, and I shall leave this as soon as possible to join the 90th at Meerut. My dear friend Vernon, of whom I have so often told you,—always my kind, winning, gentle, affectionate, and—as he has lately shown himself—my brave and generous friend, is going to apply for the same regiment, which is of course very pleasant. But beyond this I am quite in the dark as to the new land into which I am going, and yet it has a wonderful interest. I came out here six months ago with a vague hope of finding some

great work going on, to which all willing helpers would be welcome. The Bathos from these notions to the intense insignificance of an unposted Ensign, would have been wholly ludicrous, if not partly painful; but it was a painful thing to find oneself suddenly in the midst of a society, horrible, monstrous, — I fancy altogether unique. Perceiving the mere fact of the Indian Empire, we acknowledge at once that there must be, somewhere, great power and energy in it; and I trust, I believe,—Heaven help me if I did not believe it, that as I grow more familiar with the country I shall come upon phases of European society very different from the only one I have hitherto witnessed; and yet doubt almost overpowers hope, for surely any very fervent vital energy would make itself felt to one who was on the watch to detect it. I sometimes fear that it is almost impossible that any peculiar local circumstances could produce, as an exception, such a state of things as is to be found here; a society in which, I solemnly assure you that there is not one man who could be called earnest or wise. Intelligent men there are, though very few in proportion; but these have mostly but a *beaver* kind of intelligence, more or less sharp or clever, but not able, not the least profound, not the least in earnest. But the characteristic of the majority is, to name one thing only, gross and really wonderful *stupidity;* and it is very striking to observe how fatal this universal lowness of wit is to all good. Of course it is itself partly cause and partly effect; but it is I think clear that, in the majority of cases,

gross wickedness goes hand in hand with gross block-headism. If I were asked why the majority of men in this country are so much worse than they are at home, I should say, at first thought, 'because they are so much more stupid:' though of course this does but push the question a step further off: why are they more stupid? And perhaps the Irishman would not be wrong who should complete the circle by answering, 'Because they are more wicked.' But I am assured that I have as yet seen only the very worst specimen of Indian society, a very bad Native Infantry regiment. Stanton, my old steamer friend, who is now staying with me, on his way up country, tells me that most regiments are a good deal, some incomparably better than this; that other arms of the service are better than the Infantry; and he says that for the most part the staff and civil service are better than the army at large; and finally, that the *élite* of the two latter are really positively good; I suppose, in short, the salt by which our Indian empire retains any vestige of seasoning. I am sure I trust this is the case. It were a desperate project to look forward to spending one's life in probably fruitless antagonism to the grossest form of wickedness. The great object of a thinking man must always be Social Reform. So long as our European society in India is what it is, gross in its lowest phases, and (I grievously suspect) false and Mammonish in its highest, so long the most vigorous government will be nothing more than vigorous 'street constableship,' and all the mission-

arising, &c., but the binding of a rope of sand. Social Reform is becoming the cry of the world; and I fancy it must be the cry of wise men in India as much as anywhere else. And what is Social Reform? The forming society anew (a sensible man might say), on a foundation of common sense and intellect, not of animalism and violence and hazard; on a foundation (the religious man will say) of truth and justice, not of money and formulæ and (though the expression has a Puritan twang, yet it is a very meaning one) carnal comforts; on the foundation (a Christian man will say) of Christ and his gospel, which has been tried in name for eighteen hundred years, and in deed seems destined to be never tried at all; not of self-worship nor sect-worship, least of all on that most portentous of all lies, a world-wide-professing, Sunday-church-preaching, week-day-Mammon-practising Christianity. That is, in very general terms, my idea of a man's duty in this country; to help in the work, or try to set it going, of raising the *European Society*, the great influence of Asia, first from the depths of immorality, gradually to a state of comparative Christian earnestness. I am quite certain that nothing less than Christianity, in the Cromwell or in some other shape, will have any effect upon the perfectly awful *vis inertiæ* of Asiaticism. The protection of life and property, of which we hear so much, is of course a clear good; hardly though a very disinterested boon of ours to this country, for if life and property were insecure, whose throats or purses would go first? But for any purpose beyond pro-

tection to life and property (and I for one will not believe that God gave England the Indian empire for police purposes merely) an eating and drinking money-getting community is inefficient."

* * * * *

"I have come to the conclusion," said Oakfield, as they sat at breakfast the day before that fixed for Stanton's departure, "that the only thing I shall regret in Hajeepoor is the Ganges; I vote we have a farewell sail this afternoon before Stanton goes."

"It's very hot to go out in the afternoon," Stanton observed, with the prudence of a senior.

"What, hot in November, at three o'clock, and a cloudy day! why, I was going to advise you to take a cloak."

It was arranged to go, and certainly at three o'clock there seemed very little ground for Stanton's fear of the heat. The sun was seldom visible, struggling along through dry black and white clouds; it was not an inviting day; the river looked cold, and the sand-banks seemed more bleak and ruffled than usual; just the day when the leaves, had there been any, would have been blown backwards, that uncomfortable characteristic of a March day in England. Viewed nautically, however, the day was promising enough; the wind

fresh and steady, blowing nearly across the river from the right, that is to say, the Hajeepoor bank; rather up than down stream. They sailed steadily up the river,—keeping at first close to the home bank, but necessarily getting more and more into the middle of the stream as that bank receded, bending back to the confluence of the Ganges with the Soane. They got on slowly, for though the wind was fresh, the budgerow was a tub and the current strong. This did not matter, however, as they would have it in their favour returning. By five o'clock they had got about two miles up the river, and were almost close under the further bank. Their object now was to stand across and run down home. This, however, they soon found would be a longer business than they had expected. The wind gradually stealing round, now blew almost directly across the river, and their boat was not calculated to work well on a wind. The more they put the helm down the more the sail shivered, and she fell off again, and so in half-an-hour's time they found themselves opposite Hajeepoor, but not more than three hundred yards from the left bank.

"We shall be down at Ramghur before we get across," said Stanton.

"Humph," said Vernon, "I hope not; I fancy we should have *that* before we got to Ramghur;"

pointing as he spoke to a dark dirty line which was becoming more and more visible in the horizon.

"By Jove, yes!" cried Stanton; "that's a typhaon coming up, sure enough. I say, captain," turning to Oakfield at the helm, "what's to be done? You'll never be able to stand against that you know."

"No," said Oakfield, "it will be here in less than five minutes; we must run for the bank, if the worst comes to the worst we can sleep in a bunniah's hut. Can you both swim?"

"Swim!" exclaimed Vernon, who was watching the approaching storm with a sparkling eye and heightened colour; "why, I wonder how many Ganges breadths I've swum at Alborough before now: fancy a fellow living five miles from the German ocean and not swimming!"

"Well, get your boots off, for if this villanous old tub meanders about as she generally does when running before the wind, we stand a fair chance of a ducking."

While this conversation was going on, Oakfield was preparing to get the boat's head round. It was however a ticklish business. Tacking in such a machine and against the stream was out of the question, so they had nothing for it but to wear. The wind preceding the hurricane was freshening every moment, and the contest between it and

the current was becoming more and more severe. The instant the influence of the rudder was relaxed the boat fell off from her diagonal and dashed down the river on a side wind, at a pace that her three occupants, an hour beforehand, would have voted her altogether incapable of.

"We shan't get her round," said Oakfield quietly kicking off his second boot; "look out for a capsize and keep yourselves clear of the boat." As he spoke, putting the helm up at the same time to its extreme limit, the squall burst upon them with a fierce howl. "Keep well to this side," Oakfield shouted, as he sprang upon the gunwale, which was almost perpendicular to the water; "it will be over directly. It's no good, Vernon, you can't get the sail down, don't try it, man! don't try it!"

But unfortunately Vernon tried it, and the manœuvre, which might have saved them five minutes earlier, was now ruin. The sail had already dipped two or three times in the water, when Vernon lowered the rope, and the yard fell about a foot. Instantly the belly of the sail took a firm hold of the water and was too far filled to right again.

"It's all up!" cried Oakfield, as she reeled over gradually (for the squall had passed over them, and it was but the weight of the sail that now

dragged her down): "mind yourselves; better jump overboard, Vernon, and catch hold of the boat." Accordingly, as the boat turned bottom up, they half jumped, half let themselves down into the water. Stanton and Oakfield immediately rested upon the budgerow, which, keel uppermost was floating down the river in a very disconsolate fashion, at an easy pace. Vernon was less fortunate; he missed his grasp of the boat, and before he could recover himself was carried down some way below it. He turned round and tried to make towards her, or at least to hold his own till she should come alongside. Finding his efforts fruitless, he again turned round and struck out with the stream, trying to work in towards the bank.

"Bravely done!" exclaimed Stanton, who with Oakfield was anxiously watching him, while riding down the stream, holding on to the boat; "it's his only plan, but he must not be left to take care of himself. Hallo, Oakfield!" This exclamation broke from him as he perceived his companion holding on with one hand, while with the other he divested himself of his coat, waistcoat, and shirt. "Stay where you are, for God's sake, it's no good our both going."

"Then you stay, for it's my business to go."

"Well, well," said Stanton, "it's no good dis-

puting; I see we both mean to go, which is very foolish; here goes."

While speaking he had followed Oakfield's example as to stripping, and both plunging off together struck out strongly after their friend. It was getting dark, but they could still trace his light dress on the water, only a few yards in advance of them; at first the current bore both parties down at nearly an equal rate, and with little effort of theirs; but as they got into the quiet water, near the shore, it was evident that the weight of his clothes was beginning to tell upon Vernon, who seemed hardly to make any way at all. Stanton and Oakfield struck out with all their force and gained upon him rapidly, when just as they were within one stroke of him, he vanished. Oakfield, who was a trifle in advance, proceeded two or three strokes and then dived, and a wonderful sensation came over him as he felt his hand grasping human hair. Together they came to the surface, but Oakfield was all but exhausted, and a horrible fear came over him. Still he struggled on with his left arm, while with his right he laboured to keep the unconscious Vernon with his head above water, when just as Stanton came up, and relieved Oakfield of his burden, the latter's strength failed him, and in agony of doubts he let his feet down, and to his inexpressible comfort felt the muddy

ground under him. Stopping a few moments to recover his breath, which had been so entirely exhausted by the dive, he called out to Stanton to walk, and so they waded to shore with Vernon still insensible between them. They said nothing; fearfully exhausted they just looked at each other with a smile and a nod of deep expression, and then proceeded as best they could to dry and then to rub Vernon. He had been hardly a minute under water, but it was a long time before he opened his eyes. They would not allow him to speak, but procuring two or three flowing robes from some passing natives, wrapped him up and carried him to the bank, and there waited while the same natives who had lent their garments, got together the boatmen of one of the numerous budgerows; who, more prudent than our friends, had foreseen the storm and run in shore for the night, and now readily agreed to carry them across. The night was completely calm, and in about half-an-hour they were on the other bank, but a good three miles below Hajeepoor. Stanton, however, easily procured a *Charpoy** in the village where they landed, and got coolies† to carry Vernon upon it to cantonments, while he and Oakfield walked

* *Charpoy*—lit.: having four feet; signifies a bedstead.

† Coolies—the unskilled labouring class; the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

by the side. They reached their quarters about seven o'clock; the doctor came to see Vernon, who seemed to be suffering fearfully from exhaustion, but not more, the doctor said, than food and sleep would cure. So they saw him lying asleep peacefully, looking pale and calm and beautiful, and then, after recruiting their own strength and dismissing, with a sufficient reward, the natives who had befriended them, and had followed to cantonments to get their clothes back, sat down to discuss the events of the day.

CHAP. VII.

"Then followed counsel, comfort, and the words
That make a man feel strong in speaking truth."
TENNYSON.

"The steps of the bearers heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low;
The weary sound and the heavy breath;
And the silent motions of passing death."
SHELLEY.

STANTON took his departure the next day;—an anxious leave-taking, for events had confirmed the rumour of a Sikh invasion, the campaign was almost begun, and there was no telling how, or when, or where the three friends would meet again.

Vernon seemed better next morning, but was unable to leave his bed. "I want you," he said to Oakfield, who took him his breakfast, "to tell me all about it."

"How far do you remember?" said Oakfield.

"I remember everything till just before I must have gone down; I recollect the upset perfectly; by the bye, I upset you all by letting down the sail, we ought to have done that at first, Oakfield."

"We ought, I grant, but I had no idea the squall would come up so quickly; it was an unsuccessful farewell to the Ganges, wasn't it?—at least to you, for you are the only sufferer by the adventure, and you'll be all right, I hope, in a day or two."

"I don't know that, Oakfield; I feel rather queer, I suspect I have not been very well for some time, I thought it was all over with me yesterday."

"When?"

"Only just for an instant; I recollect feeling that I could swim no further, and a momentary impression flashed across me that I was going to die; but here I am you see, and perhaps going to die in my bed." He said this so sadly that Oakfield, who had been walking up and down the room, stopped short and turned to look at him. There was a soft smile on his face and a tear in his eye.

"My dear Arthur, what is it? are you ill? do you really feel alarmed about yourself?"

"I think I'm going to be very ill, Oakfield; I have a pain here," putting his hand on his side, "and a tightness across the chest, and altogether feel down."

Oakfield became thoroughly alarmed, and or-

dering his horse, galloped over to Watson, the doctor of the corps.

"You saw Vernon this morning, Doctor?"

"Yes; why?"

"What did you think of him? He seems very unwell, and nervous about himself."

"I thought him looking very unwell, certainly," replied the other, "but he didn't complain of anything. I asked him if he felt comfortable, and he said yes."

"I wish you would come and have a look at him; he speaks of pain in his side, and so on."

This was quite enough for the good doctor, who was not only thoroughly zealous in his profession, but had come out, as doctors and nurses often do, from the harassing worry and watching of a large town-practice at home, quite overflowing with the milk of human kindness.

He found Vernon suffering from evident symptoms of violent inflammation, and instantly adopted strong remedies. That evening the poor boy lay, weakened by the application of sixty leeches, with a large blister on his chest; pale and silent, established for days, if not for weeks, as an invalid. Oakfield sat by him reading and talking quietly to him from time to time.

"Do the fellows in the regiment know of our accident, Oakfield?"

"Oh yes; I had a note from the Colonel this morning, asking after you; and Smith and Brown called this evening."

"No! did they? I am glad of that; I thought they had cut me."

Oakfield was touched by the ready sensibility to kindness, or rather by the shrinking from unkindness or coldness, and felt again what a noble effort plain speaking must have cost such a gentle nature. Presently, after lying still for a long time, he said, "Oakfield, shall you go to New Zealand?"

"Why, what put that into your head now? we havn't talked of New Zealand for a long time; it depends partly upon you, you know; I shan't go without you."

"I hope you will go," Vernon went on, without noticing the answer, "you will never like this country, Oakfield."

"Well, but that doesn't signify much; we cannot go all over the world looking for a place we shall like."

"But may not you look out for a place that likes you? Why that's what you used to say yourself."

"So I used, Arthur, and I don't know that I should deny it now, but I have thought more of the other side of the question lately; especially

since you and Stanton and I have been so much together."

"And what do you call the other side of the question?"

"That we ought to stand still and see what God will do for us: that we should overcome our position, and not run away from it: above all, the shortness of life,—that in a few years we shall go, and then all these things that harass us, vanish into oblivion, and that it is really of comparatively very little consequence whether these few years are happily spent or not."

"That's very true, so long as you can keep the shortness of life present to you; but one forgets it."

"Indeed one does, but I think one of the good things we owe to this country is, that it helps us to remember it; and once get this present to us, as you say, and we have the 'philosophic mind' at once."

"That's true, I think, about this country," said Vernon, "one does feel the uncertainty of life more; I wonder why?"

"I fancy because we get into the habit of looking forward to distant periods, such as furlough, retirement, and so on; and thus cannnot but feel occasionally the great chance which separates us from the certain prospect of these."

"And can you feel quite happy when you

realise the shortness of life, or when you think steadily of death?"

"To say I feel happy in the sense that a Christian is happy at the thought of death, would be to assume that I was in the land of Beulah, when I have hardly set out on pilgrimage; but I certainly have no fear of death, and I do find immense comfort in the thought of the oblivion we spoke of."

"But does not the thought of not seeing your family again make it horrible to you? Oh, Oakfield, my mother! think of her;" and he burst into tears. It was evident that he had been talking generally, but with his own case uppermost in his mind. Oakfield was angry with himself for having inadvertently produced an agitation which might be injurious, but he was too sensible and too sincere to give the absurd commonplace advice of "never mind," "don't think about it," "compose yourself," and all the rest of it. He tried to think honestly what was likely to be the most real comfort in such a case. "Dear, dear Arthur," he said, taking his hand in both his own, and leaning over the bed, and speaking very softly, "it *is* sad, and always must be; it is one of the things that makes our life not a happy, but a sad and solemn one; we must admit this, and make up our minds to it.

There is some comfort even in this — in acknowledging sorrow and then resolving to bear, that is to overcome it; but for us, Arthur, there is a comfort beyond this."

"Yes, I know what you mean."

"It is indeed well known to us all: perhaps so well known as to have the less power of comfort on that account. But you know how often we have agreed about avoiding triteness in our religion, by trying to apply it practically to all the occasions of life. Consider, Arthur. We often hear people talk of the *consolations of religion* in such an obviously funereal way — and see so clearly that they really find no consolation in them, that we are apt to think they really *are* a form, and have no power of comfort in them; and yet depend upon it they have, though the comfort will not come to us, if we sit waiting for it, till doomsday; yet we may force it to come by an effort. Try now. Try to fix your mind upon Martha and Mary waiting for Jesus. Think of them there, at Bethany; their brother too is gone; they have had all the melancholy of a funeral, and the real and the forced gravity of countenance in all around them; they have gone through all the self-torture of recalling their dead brother, his looks upon different occasions, their last words with him, — their early intercourse as children, their later true friendship as

brother and sister, and now he is dead; in the cold sepulchre, bound in the hideous grave-clothes; they can never see him again. Well, it is sad, and life is a sad thing, Arthur, but then there were the 'consolations of religion' for them which they found to be not at all a powerless form. They sent to Jesus. He comes and finds that there is something more sad than even the death of a friend or a brother. He healed *that* sorrow, and not only so, but said to Martha, and says actually to you and me, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life;' not only do I raise Lazarus, but I am to all for evermore the resurrection and the life. Think that He who spoke and did, as we know, at Bethany, eighteen hundred years ago, is actually ready, is here present to comfort our sorrow now; now this sad evening at Hajeepoor; loves us and looks tenderly on us as he did on Martha and Mary. Is not there some consolation in this, Arthur?"

The young boy was deeply touched; Oakfield knelt by his bedside, and they prayed together in simple earnest words, and when Oakfield saw his calm pale face, as the sick boy lay asleep that night, he felt that the agitation had not done him much harm after all.

Vernon continued in much the same state for some days; the doctor hardly knew, he said, why

he did not get better; he had no fever, the inflammation was subdued, and the worst symptoms were his weakness and his blind perception of some obscure disease. He was quite unable to leave his bed, could hardly lift himself up, indeed, without assistance; Oakfield and the doctor watched him day and night. The former read to him and talked with him; not often on what would be called directly religious subjects, but on matters which, being so serious as life and man's position in life, are perhaps really the very ground of all religion.

It was about a week after the conversation recorded above, that they first observed a swelling on his chest, which symptom was accompanied by profuse and continued perspiration. Constant poulticing made this swelling more and more decided; and it was obvious that there was internal mischief, probably no less than that fearful Indian scourge, abscess of the liver. So he continued for three weeks longer, becoming continually weaker and weaker. About eleven o'clock in the day was generally his best time, when his bed was moved into the verandah, for the mild December warmth, and Oakfield washed his hands and face and set up his pillows for him. There he would lie with his poor, pale, smiling face, looking delicate almost as a girl's, turned upon his true strong friend, who sat by him reading, but always ready to talk when

the invalid was able to bear it. They were sitting so one day in December, when the overland letters came in both for Oakfield and for Vernon. Vernon took his eagerly, an unwonted flush came over his countenance, and the ready tears took advantage of his bodily weakness to betray his deep emotion.

"Isn't that your brother's hand-writing?" said Oakfield.

"Oh, such a jolly letter!" Vernon answered; "he has gone home after being absent nearly three years; and he describes his arrival. Read it yourself; read it out loud to me."

Oakfield did as he was told, and could understand Vernon's intense feeling, half pleasure half pain, at the detailed graphical account given by the young sailor, of his return home, and how he found everything the same after his three years' absence. "That is delightful indeed," exclaimed Oakfield, "such a letter as this is the next best thing to going home oneself. I should like to know your brother; he must be a brick."

"I should just think he was. Oh, you must know him some day; he'll be an extraordinary man depend upon it; he is madly fond of his profession, and you see how he feels about home; there are not many boys of fourteen who could have written such a letter as that, are there?"

"Indeed there are not," Oakfield said, with perfect honesty.

"Poor little boy! how fond he was of me," Vernon went on and his eyes filled again, "we were the only two boys, you know, and though I was four years older we were complete companions. I remember I taught him how to steer a boat on the Orwell years ago; and he told me in one of his letters, that he thought of that one day when first steering one of the ship's boats on the Tagus. You must promise, Oakfield, to go to my place if ever you go back to England. Oakfield," he said, after a pause, speaking abruptly, "do you think I shall die?"

Oakfield had for some days anticipated this question; leaning down he said softly, "You are very dangerously ill, Arthur, and the doctor does not know whether you will recover or not; dearest Arthur, I dare not mock you by giving you a false answer: it is very awful, God strengthen you, Arthur!"

The boy lay back with his eyes closed, and made no answer.

"I feel far less startled than I dare say you think; I suppose it is because I've thought so much about dying lately, and we have talked about it so often, and life has been so much more solemn. Oh, Oakfield, fancy if this had happened

six months ago! I do thank God for sending you here."

It is a moment of awful happiness when man from the bottom of his heart thanks God for that great gift — a friend; an awful and an allowable happiness: weak as we are and as we feel, little able, we know, to support ourselves, still less another, yet here our brother thanks God for us. Our brother lying between life and death, with awful sincerity thanks God for us. Truly we may with all humbleness thank God also.

Both were deeply moved, and sat some time in silence; nor did they renew the conversation in the same strain. Oakfield abstained scrupulously from any attempt to work upon feelings so finely stretched, and if at times these feelings would find utterance, yet the occasions were rare, and for the most part the intercourse between them was grave indeed, but calm and sober, taking a tone, not in actual words, but no less really, from the deep consciousness that was in them both of life and death, and the meaning that is in those words.

Except Oakfield, Vernon hardly saw anybody. The officers of the regiment called frequently to enquire after him, all unkind feelings being completely obliterated by the presence of deadly sickness, but were not allowed to see him. The doctor, a good kind man, had all his life associated

"religion and all that" with gloom, the hopeless stage of illness, and the parson. He would talk in a cheerful voice of the news of the station, of the time when Vernon would be up and about again; all which the patient heard very quietly, and understanding how it was meant, gratefully, but with a silent incredulity that would have astonished the good doctor could he have been aware of it. Meanwhile, he perceived that Oakfield got on best with him, and that Vernon never seemed quite satisfied when he was absent, "Though how a sick man can like to talk about dying all day," he would say, "I can't comprehend."

"But my dear doctor, we very seldom talk about dying."

"Well, but you talk religious, which is all the same thing."

"Why," answered Oakfield, laughing, "I doubt whether in the sense you mean, that we talk much religious either; you don't expect a person who may be on his death-bed to be very facetious?"

"But he doesn't know that he may be on his death-bed."

"Oh, yes, he does; I told him so."

"You did! Good heavens, what madness! I must say, Oakfield, that, to take such a liberty with a patient of mine"—

"My dear doctor, do you think it has done

him any harm? it was more than a week ago that I told him."

"More than a week ago! And he never said a word to me about it. Well, you certainly are two odd fellows. Oh, you may say what you like; I shan't interfere; but, I say, wouldn't he like to see the padré? I didn't like to suggest it before for fear of frightening him, but if he knows his state"—

"Thank you," said Oakfield, "I'll ask him, though I don't think he will; but what do you think of his state, Watson? Is there any hope?"

"I fear very little, poor boy! I fear the abscess must be very deep."

"When do you think it is likely to come to a crisis?"

"It's impossible to say, exactly, but I should think he'd be out of danger or a dead man this day week."

Oakfield shuddered with pain, and turned aside with an instinctive reluctance to display his feelings. He had been so absorbed in his attendance at the sick bed, in his earnest searching of his own heart, to try and find what would be most likely to be of comfort to himself under the same circumstances, that so he might the more readily comfort Arthur, that he had scarcely considered the pang which his own heart and affections would have to

endure if his friend was taken from him. He had, however, now to keep his promise to Watson, and ask Vernon about seeing the clergyman. He did not like the errand. He knew Mr. Wood to be a respectable, commonplace, to all appearances rather worldly, man. He knew exactly how he would regard a summons to a sick bed; as a duty to be gone through almost as methodically as his Sunday service. He would not come in hypocrisy, but still Oakfield felt how inexpressibly painful any appearance of commonplace, cut and dried, sham consolation would be to himself in the presence of such an awful truth as death. However, he could hardly refuse to ask Vernon, and besides, he had promised Watson to do so; Vernon, however, relieved him immediately, — "No thank you, old fellow, no, I don't like the notion of sending for a clergyman as one would for a doctor; it isn't the time to commence an intimacy, and I must be intimate with a man, be he clergyman or anybody else, before I can talk to him as I do to you. You don't think *I ought* to see him, do you?"

"No, indeed, dear Arthur; you have spoken my feelings about the matter most exactly, I only asked because I promised I would; I feel precisely as you do about it." So Oakfield told the doctor that Vernon was very much obliged to him for asking, but as he had not known Mr. Wood, he

would rather not see him; which bewildered the poor doctor more than all the rest. That night, Oakfield and Vernon (the latter for the last time on earth) ate and drank together the bread and wine in remembrance of the death of their Lord and Master.

> "They ate and drank, then calmly blest;
> *Both* mourners, one with dying breath,
> They sat and talked of Jesus' death;"

and found that the consolations of religion were not a form when not sought or applied in a formal spirit.

Vernon continued in the same state for three or four days, the only difference being his still increasing weakness, and the great enlargement of the swelling on his chest. One cold blowing December night, Oakfield was as usual sitting by his side dozing, but from the training of the last month, ready to wake up in an instant if his services were needed. It was about eight o'clock when Vernon opened his eyes, and said in a low, scarcely audible voice, "Oakfield,"—he was awake and at his bedside in an instant, "Oakfield, I have got a terrible pain here," laying his hand on his side. As he spoke it seemed to increase, his face was almost convulsed with agony, as he lay patient and speechless. The doctor was instantly sum-

moned: he looked at his chest; the swelling was altogether gone, the skin where it had been, lying loose, flat, and discoloured. Watson shook his head. "The abscess is gone internally," he whispered to Oakfield, "there's nothing to be done but to ease this terrible pain, poor fellow!"

He gave him a strong dose of laudanum, and the effect was soon evident; the pain became lulled, and he lay throughout the night in a short, broken, uneasy sleep. But when day-light broke it was clear that the hand of death was upon that pale suffering face. All day long he lay in the same fitful half-artificial slumber; towards evening he woke up and talked with Oakfield in his natural quiet tone, speaking of his family and of his own state, but apparently not knowing how near his end was. To others, however, it was quite manifest.

"Why have you changed the light to-night?" he asked of Oakfield, who at first did not understand him. On hearing the question repeated, however, he told him that there was no difference.

"Surely you have got the room darker than usual?"

"No; there were the two lamps," Oakfield said, "the same as every night."

"Ah well!" he said, with a long sigh, "I suppose it is I can't see so well."

He lay back, and for about an hour remained

silent. At the end of that time he sprang up with a suddenness and energy that startled Oakfield beyond expression, and shouted rather than said, in a voice the doctor heard three rooms off, "I'm dying!" Exhausted by the effort, he sank back, and Oakfield kneeling down by his bed-side found his pillow wet with tears. Vernon looked at Oakfield, and smiling through his tears, stretched out his hand, laid it upon his head, and said, "God bless you." They were the last words that Oakfield and Watson could hear. He lay for some time with his hands joined, murmuring indistinct sounds, but these gradually ceased, and the one sound in that silent room was the breathings of the dying boy, at longer and longer intervals. They watched and watched: no change was seen; no movement disturbed that calm, but at last the slowly heaving chest was still: still they watched, but no breath followed; and they knew that he was gone. That young soul had done its life battle and was at rest.

For a long time the two watchers sat in the same posture; silent and motionless as the lifeless form before them; at last the doctor rose up, saying, "Ah—poor lad!" At the words Oakfield's grief broke from him, and the repressed emotions of the preceding weeks rushed upon him with a violence that shook his whole frame. The doctor

took him by the arm and led him into the next room, and then, while other hands did the offices of death for him, whom in life he alone had so truly and tenderly cared for, he fell into a deep and heavy sleep, to awake in the morning and find that the absorbing interest of the last month was past, to begin to realise the fact that his brave young friend was dead. The next day was an entirely painful one. There may be something morbid, perhaps, something factitious in the ceremony and circumstance with which death is invested in an English household, but certainly there is, on the other hand, something very shocking to the delicacy of grief, in the loud intrusion which Indian usage and military regulations necessitate.

Oakfield woke to find the house, which had been so long wrapped in perfect quiet, beset with strange faces. In one room lay the dead, and there men were receiving orders for the funeral, which was to take place in the evening. In the next room Captain Roberts, a complete stranger to Oakfield, who had been named as president of the committee of adjustment, was sealing up all the boxes containing Vernon's property; while the harsh formal appearance of the business was not relieved by the tramp of the sentry, who had been just posted in the quarters. Oakfield passed a wretched day; the obvious anxiety on all sides to get the

funeral over, and death out of sight as speedily as possible, was of itself painful; and the hard dull pain, which solitude and thought could alone melt into a loving soothing grief, was protracted by the bustle of business with which he was surrounded.

At five o'clock that evening, Watson came to tell him to dress, that the carrying party were at the door. Oakfield saw the body carried out; Vernon's sword sash and shako lay upon the coffin; he and three other Ensigns bore the pall; and the party, joined as they went along by almost all the officers of the garrison, moved in slow time to the death-like notes of the Dead March in Saul, across the large, white, desolate, barrack square, to the burying ground. The service was read; the firing party discharged three volleys over the grave, and then the one object seemed to be to shake off all impression of solemnity as soon as possible. The band struck up a lively march, the troops with sloped arms went away at the quick step, officers galloped off to get off their full dress, and go out for their ride on the course; and in half-an-hour Vernon's memory had no place in Hajeepoor. Except in one heart. The hours passed on that night and still left Oakfield walking by the banks of the Ganges, as its waters splintered mournfully in the moonlight, thinking on his dead friend; cherishing his love and grief

for him, and resolving to hold fast the great lesson that had been given to himself; having been, at the outset of his Indian life, brought in such close contact with sickness and death, to believe in the truth which they taught, and not to allow that truth to be hidden under the varnish of a noisy worldliness.

CHAP. VIII.

"That which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."

TENNYSON.

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

PAUL, Romans xiv. 5.

IT may readily be imagined that Oakfield was not sorry when, on the 1st of January, 1846, he was told that a steamer was at the ghat. He took leave of Watson, the only person with whom he had kept up much intercourse since Vernon's death, and went on board; and early the next morning, just as the gun was fired directly above the steamer, almost shaking the passengers out of their beds, the anchor was weighed, and they started for Allahabad, steaming quickly over the two miles which Oakfield had last traversed in the boat with Vernon and Stanton, the day of their misadventure.

There were only four persons in the cabin, to all of whom, Oakfield was introduced at breakfast

time, by the captain. Lieutenant Dacre, of the 101st, going to join his regiment, after six months' leave to Calcutta, a quiet inoffensive man, of about five and twenty, who managed to get through the short day by the help of three meals, and a connecting line of brandy and water and cheroots; Mr. Middleton, of the Civil Service—an intelligent gentlemanly-looking man, of apparently some ten or twelve years' standing, who was going to that gorgeous land of civilian imagination—the North Western Frontier; the Rev. Mr. Wallace, an assistant chaplain, fresh from Oxford, on his way to "take spiritual charge" of Meerut, with an agreeable and very gentlemanly manner, but an ominously cut waistcoat, and a tie whose starch looked "popish." The fourth was introduced as simply "Mr. Malone," and what he was, did not easily appear. What he was not, was sufficiently evident. He was not an officer, or he would assuredly have had either a forage cap, or a "solar topee"* on his head, and the punctilious captain would certainly have given his rank, had it lain between any of the known latitudes from Major General to Ensign. He wore a black coat and a black hat, but of a seediness that any member of

* "Solar topee." Topee signifies "hat;" solar is the name of a very light material of which large umbrella-like hats are made, to keep off the sun.

the Bengal Civil Service would have repudiated. He wore a neck-cloth, which he himself and a complaisant friend might have called white, but even could the Church of England have been suspected of that loose soiled linen, yet the brilliant plaid waistcoat, and broadly chequed trousers at once excluded the idea of Mr. Malone being an orthodox padré. An unorthodox one perhaps; one of the numerous dissenting ministers. Here again the glowing costume, and still more the glowing nose, and loose, rather dissipated countenance, were against the hypothesis. He might belong to some branch of the wide-extending, amphibious "uncovenanted service," those strange unclassable mortals who, some say, do more than half the work of the country, and most undeniably get less than half a quarter of the good things of it. And yet he had nothing *clerky* about his appearance; and you might swear was not a hard-working man. He had thin sandy hair, and little of it; large red features, a grey shrewd eye, a rough, reddish, ill-shaven beard, a broad-shouldered, broad-chested, strong, rather ungainly figure; might be about thirty-five or forty years of age; wore his clothes loosely, and had rather a dirty, dissipated, yet withal a shrewd, not ill-natured expression of countenance; nor did it require his Hibernian name, and the rich brogue which gar-

nished his unceasing loquacity, to prove him an Irishman. During breakfast, which Captain Browne provided with more liberality than is quite usual with commanders of river steamers, Oakfield made the observations of which the above was pretty nearly the result. The usual formalities with which shore-goers hail each other when they meet, which, after all, are little more than a prolix variation of the "where from," "whither bound," "what's your name," of the sailors,—being got over, there is no saying what turn the conversation might have taken; but Mr. Malone was far from satisfied with the scanty information, that Oakfield had been doing duty with the 81st, and was going up to Meerut to join the 90th: that he did not much like the country, and so on: "Pray, Sir," he began, with an accent which we, being but English, must ask the reader to insert for himself, "may I ask if you're anything to the Oakfields of Durham?"

Oakfield said he believed not, did not indeed know that there were any Oakfields of Durham.

"Oh, yes, Sir; Mr. Oakfield, of Castleton Hall, Durham. A very nice property it is; it's not a year ago that I was staying there. Oakfield," he continued, in a musing voice, "there's Mr. Oakfield, of Leatheburn"—

"Good gracious!" Oakfield exclaimed, with a

start of surprise: then recovering himself, he asked more quietly, "Do you know anything of him, Sir?"

"Oh, indeed, and I did know Mr. Oakfield very well; was he your papa, Sir?"

"He was my father," said Oakfield, substituting the more dignified name for the relationship.

"Oh, and I see you are very like him. I knew your papa, Sir, twenty years ago, when he was a poor curate in London; fine property that he came into; and queerly he came upon it."

Oakfield was quite taken aback by the strange mixture of knowledge and ignorance displayed by this stranger's remarks about his father; he certainly had been a curate in London twenty years back, and had come into the small Westmoreland estate, which he had held as squire and parson, by a strange unforeseen contingency; but no one who had known him or it, would speak of Leatheburn as a fine property. He said, laughing, "Well, I don't know that people would call a small estate of 500*l.* a-year, a fine property."

"Oh, bless my soul, 500*l.* a year! what are you talking about? — ah I see;" he added, perceiving that Oakfield was going to interrupt him, "You're a young gentleman, and don't know much of your mamma's affairs; came out here to be kept out of harm's way; I understand." And

he winked at the other passengers with such a delicious impudence, that Oakfield did not know whether to be amused or indignant.

"You needn't be surprised," said Mr. Middleton, laughing, to Oakfield, "Mr. Malone knows more about all of us than we do ourselves; he's an extraordinary man;" he added in a low tone, observing that the subject of his remark was expatiating to his neighbour, Mr. Wallace, on the splendour of Oakfield's prospects,—"there's not a man at this table whose family history he hasn't got some inkling of; you mustn't be offended at his impertinence, he's great fun I assure you."

"What is he?" Oakfield asked.

"Why that's more than I can tell you," replied the other, as they got up and went out on to the deck; "he seems either to be or have been connected with the English press—with some London newspaper; discourses a good deal upon the renewal of the Charter; talks with a strange mixture of knowledge and absurd ignorance about the state of things in this country, writes a good deal, I fancy notes on what he sees and hears about India; but how long he will be in the country, or what his exact business is, or where he is going now, I can't say; in fact, *himself* is the only subject on which he seems troubled with the least reserve."

Oakfield found Mr. Middleton a pleasing in-

telligent companion: he had been in India ten years, was fond of his profession, and hard work had greatly raised and improved him. It must be allowed, indeed, to the Bengal civilians, that they are for the most part a hard-working set, and it is a wonderful proof of the influence work has upon a man, that the young fop of eighteen or nineteen, with no better training than the hybrid half-school, half-college system of Haileybury can give him, is developed mostly into the persevering and sensible, often the zealous and able man of thirty.

"I suppose," Oakfield said, after they had been some time talking of India, Natives, and so on, "that you look forward, as most of your service do, with great interest to the renewal of the Charter."

"Well it is some way off yet; and if it were nearer I think its importance is exaggerated. I for one should certainly look forward to any alterations with more apprehension than hope."

"That is the case with most of your service I suppose?"

"Yes, and I fear that too often the apprehensions spring from interested motives; but I really believe that this country would be a loser by any serious interference."

"I own," said Oakfield, "if you will allow me to speak at all on a subject on which I have so

very little experience, that I should have fancied that the English community in this country being what it is, any reform from within is not to be hoped for, and that England"—

"I agree with you," interrupted Mr. Middleton, "any great movement in this country must, I believe, or at any rate will, originate in an English rather than an Indian agitation, but I do not think that a Leadenhall Street, or a Cannon Row interference is at all the same thing."

"But would it not be a parliamentary interference?"

"Of course, nominally; but it depends upon the amount of feeling in the country as to whether the Company and the Board of Control have it all their own way in parliament, and you know how very little interest exists in England about India."

"More than used to do."

"Undoubtedly, and will be more and more, and perhaps if you live some fifty years longer, not to this but the next renewal of the Charter, you will see something worth seeing, but till then I think we shall jog on our old ways."

"And are those ways such as you can be content to jog on in?"

"I think on the whole—yes. You see the first thing to be done in this country is what I grant ought to have been begun long ago, notwithstand-

ing our wars; which might certainly have been begun in the long interval of comparative peace, from the siege of Bhurtpoor to the Cabul war, which is in fact only being begun now; viz., the *physical* civilisation of the country; we have enemies enough to conquer in the shape of Time, and Space, and Jungle, to employ us for the next half century; roads — canals — possibly rail-roads — mining — getting more and more land brought into cultivation — this is our first obvious elementary duty to the country, and this we are beginning to see, without any pressure from without."

"And is this all?" said Oakfield, in rather a disappointed tone, "is the English message to India civil engineering simply?"

"Not quite," said Mr. Middleton, good humouredly, "but it is an important — I think *the* important part of it just now. At any rate the neglect of it has long been a just reproach to us. A few thousand miles more of Grand Trunk Road, ditto of Canals, and people will no longer be able to say, that if the English were swept off the face of Hindostan to-morrow, the only trace they would leave behind would be the broken tobacco-pipes of their soldiers."

"At any rate they might add the cheroots of their officers," said Oakfield, pointing to Lieut. Dacre, who was just throwing away the remains of

the nineteenth and lighting the twentieth cheroot of the morning.

"How the man does smoke!" said Middleton, looking at him in wonder; "but to what we were saying,—depend upon it that road-making, and so on, is not a thing to be sneered at; to subdue physical nature is man's first great work everywhere; how the greatest of ancient people left their mark upon the face of the earth! and how has that, which you and I should call the greatest of modern nations, been doing the same in these last years. Nationally this is, I believe, our main business for the next forty years, the rest depends upon individuals. You have no idea what a blessing to a district a good officer is. He has great power, though less than he had (more's the pity); and those under him have a real governor over them, better or worse, as the case may be; but still a governor, which is a great thing gained for any people."

"But do you not contemplate a time when this government shall pass into the people's own hands?"

"Surely; I do contemplate it, but I confess, as an infinitely remote event, of which, at present, it is I think impossible to detect any, the faintest symptom. The grand fault in our government has been and is, that it does *not* contemplate this,

and does not therefore try to find out the causes which at present make it so utterly unfeasible. So long as government is thus indifferent, so long I acknowledge our national work in this country —at least a great part of it, is being neglected, not without national sin."

"Then you mean to say, that all the talk as to the magnificent work of civilising Asia through British influence in India is"—

"Humbug in practice, and it has grieved many generous hearts before now to find it so. No, my dear Sir, depend upon it, that the glorious epoch, the veriest commencement of realisation of those great ideas you speak of, is far distant. The work of individuals in this country must be for our time, and I believe far beyond it, not to join in a triumphant advance, but to devote themselves for the sake of those who come after. Many die in the trench before the successful stormers pass over their dead bodies to the breach. It is an old figure—but a very true one. Much silent toil to keep the actual machine of government going, and the British power in India firm,—this is the first thing—but besides this, much silent, unheeded, unthanked toil, by which individuals must try to solve those problems, which must one day be taken in hand nationally, if we would continue, but which will not be thought of while they can be

postponed; that is, not for many a long year—not till they have broken many brave hearts."

"And what are those problems, stated broadly?"

"First and foremost to ascertain what is the point, at which the European and the Native mind begin to diverge. We all see the result, it proclaims itself to the stupidest; complete separation in taste, in feeling, in religion, and apparent incompatibility. The fact, I say, is obvious to us all; from the civil magistrate who finds it utterly impossible to get the truth out of a witness, to the griff who knocks his bearer down for coming into the room with his head covered: but is the incompatibility, not in little things only, in manners and taste, but in the most vital feelings of humanity, is this necessary, is it to be lasting, and is the language about our common brotherhood as false in theory as in actuality, or is there really some common ground of the same human nature, discoverable, though as yet not found, scarcely looked for? And if there is any such common ground, what is it? and where, as I said before, do the European and Asiatic mind begin to diverge; what is the small point of difference from which the two first tend towards such opposite poles? There is one great problem for you; the parent of a hundred others: a problem too which carries its unsolved mystery into every hour of your daily

life. Look at that khidmutgar* there, carrying in the tiffin: he has been in my service ten years; I think him a good servant, but believe that he did cheat me yesterday, is cheating me to-day, and will cheat me to-morrow. I really like the man, have an actual personal kindness to him, but I know that self-interest would tempt him away from me to-morrow; and that our connection will be to his mind a simply mercenary one to the end, and that no kindness or effort of mine can make it otherwise. Then again, our English society in India; why should it be a proverbial, and to so great an extent, a true saying, that an Englishman leaves his morals at the Cape; why is English society in this country so woefully behind all European society elsewhere? Here is problem number two; easier to solve, I admit, for some of the causes are very obvious, but hardly less important."

"You have given me a different impression of India, and life out here, certainly," said Oakfield, "and there is a great sound of truth in what you say, disappointing as it is."

"Not more disappointing, believe me," said Mr. Middleton, in a sad tone, as he stopped in his quarter-deck career, and looked down upon the

* Khidmutgar, the common name for table attendant.

water, "not more disappointing than all life is. We start with fervour in other lines besides this Indian work, and in all we shall find, not that our fervour is wasted—God forbid,—but that it must vent itself in silent, painful, perhaps apparently unfruitful work, not in the grand triumphal march we had pictured to ourselves. You must excuse me," he added, "if I seem to speak more seriously than our short acquaintance warrants, but I perceive," touching his own crape-covered hat, and glancing at the black band on Oakfield's arm, "that we have been to the same school lately, and this is a great letter of introduction."

"I assure you," said Oakfield, warmly, "I feel greatly indebted to you; I have had, hitherto, merely vain shadowy dreamings about India; that there was something to be done which was not done, much to be undone that was done; but you have given me the first glimpse of a distinct idea; it is a great satisfaction, a great help to hear any one talk of this country as one thinks an Englishman should do, for really I have been disgusted to find how many speak of it as though it were no more to them, than that carcase floating along there is to the vultures feeding on it."

They went into the cabin where they found their three fellow passengers sitting down to tiffin.

"Well, Mr. Malone," Mr. Middleton began, "I

suppose you have been busy as usual all the morning?"

"True, Sir, true; the Press is a mighty engine, Sir; we don't let the grass grow under our feet."

"What, are you writing a book?" blundered out Lieutenant Dacre, as he took the second wing off the unhappy looking duck before him.

Mr. Wallace seeing the Irishman's embarrassment at this home thrust, good-naturedly came to the rescue. "That's rather a leading question, eh, Mr. Malone? and yet," he said, going on to get off an awkward subject,—"I wonder there are not more authors in this country, too; there is an extraordinary proportion of men of comparative leisure, and there is certainly plenty to write about."

"And pray, Sir, why don't you set a good example?" asked the incorrigible Malone, who could not resist the temptation to catechise others, though he so evidently disliked it himself.

"That's rather ungrateful of you, Mr. Malone," replied the clergyman, laughing, "to put me in the confessional when I have just delivered you from the hands of the Philistines,"—glancing at Lieutenant Dacre, who had, however, entirely lost all interest in the conversation during his devotion to the curry,—"but, however, how do you know I don't write? My great work on the 'Antiquities

of India,' or 'Travels in the East,' or what not, may be 'in the Press, and shortly to appear,' at this minute, for all you know."

Mr. Malone, who had a suspicion that he was being laughed at, and did not at all like the notion of being chaffed by the parson, shook his head and said, "I beg your pardon, Sir, but it strikes me that Travels and that style of thing are rather out of your line; if I were you I would write a book about my own trade."

"Perhaps," suggested Oakfield, "Mr. Wallace considers that a book of travels might come within the limits of his trade as you call it."

The clergyman looked pleased.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Malone; "what would your poor dear papa have said, Mr. Oakfield, if he had heard you say that gadding was the business of a clergyman! No, no," he continued, shaking his head with an air of delightful self-complacency — and in a solemn tone which he thought became "*religious discourse:*" "I honor religion, Sir; I say always 'stick to religion,' and depend upon it those new-fangled notions that some of the papers get hold of now-a-days, what I call latitudinarian views, and nothing better, — will be the ruin of the country. Excuse me, Sir," turning to Oakfield,—"but I didn't like the sound of what you said about clergymen and travels; it

had a latitudinarian twang, Sir. What I say is, let all things be done decently and in order. I respect the clergy, but let us have them in their proper sphere. If the clergy begin dabbling in things out of their sphere — excuse me, Sir," — turning to Mr. Wallace, "I allude to what Mr. Oakfield said, nothing at all personal, — down goes the church; and if the church goes down, the aristocracy goes with it; and then you know" —

"Well, Sir?" said Mr. Middleton, seeing he paused, as if the conclusion was obvious, "Well, Sir?" —

"Oh, why then, you know, Sir, down goes the country."

"Well, but Mr. Malone," said Mr. Middleton, who had been much amused at the foregoing harangue, delivered with all due oratorical arm flourishing and table-thumping, "what do you consider the proper sphere of the clergy? Because you know if we are all a house of cards, with them for the foundation, we should look sharp after them."

"I must say," said Mr. Wallace, "I think there's a great deal of truth in what Mr. Malone said."

"There comes the cloven hoof peeping out," whispered Mr. Middleton to Oakfield, "let us go on deck."

"I don't know that I should quite agree with you, Mr. Malone," Mr. Wallace continued, "in so limiting a clergyman's sphere of action; for surely there is no subject which is not capable of being happily brought within the general influence of the church, but I very much agree with what you say about the mutual dependence of the church and aristocracy on each other, and the country on both."

"Oh, beyond a doubt, Sir. Church and State, the very keystone of our glorious constitution; but, Sir, may I be allowed to ask —*are* you writing for the Press?"

"Why, really, Mr. Malone, you must let me remind you how very obviously you objected to that question when put to yourself; however, I have no objection in telling you that I *have* been more or less employed lately in that way, having been for some time without any direct ministerial charge, though not on the subjects alluded to in jest."

"Ah!" said Mr. Malone, whose inquisitiveness was now thoroughly uppermost in him, "a theological treatise, I presume?"

"You may call it so, Sir," said Mr. Wallace, insensibly warming into the glow of author-vanity, at finding a willing and even pressing auditor; "You spoke so sensibly, Sir, and, I may add, so

rightly, of the church just now, that I have less scruple in admitting to you that I am preparing a work on the Church in India; endeavouring to show how entirely all state progress in this country depends upon a deliberate orthodox establishment of the one true church."

"To be sure, Sir, to be sure; very right, very proper;" said Mr. Malone, who having got the clue, thought he could fancy all the rest. The fact was, Mr. Malone had been very steadily imbibing Lieutenant Dacre's brandy and water for a considerable period, and began to be more emphatic than was at all necessary. "Very right, Sir, stick to the church, and damn dissent!"

Poor scandalised Mr. Wallace jumped up as if he had been shot. "I must say, Sir," he began, but looking at his companion's flustered excited countenance, he saw how matters stood, and, regretting his misplaced confidence, prudently left the cabin.

"What a thousand pities it is," he said, joining Oakfield and Mr. Middleton on deck, "that a clever man like that, who can think and speak so well at times, should be the victim of that degrading habit of drinking!"

And what an extraordinary thing it is, perhaps Oakfield might have said to himself, that you, a good man, and sensible on the whole, should allow yourself to be imposed upon by such a fellow as

that Irish adventurer, merely because he utters a few sentences of your own sectarian slang!

Meanwhile Mr. Malone and Lieutenant Dacre were left to themselves and the brandy.

"I say," said Mr. Malone, "I made a mistake there—sorry for it; very wrong to swear before a parson; I think I'll apologise."

"By Jove!" said the taciturn Lieutenant, "you talked like a parson yourself at first; how you did go on about church and aristocracy, and Lord knows what else." And the youth, gazing with admiration at his gifted companion, lit another cheroot, and relapsed into silence.

"Why, you see," Mr. Malone replied, accepting a cheroot from Lieutenant Dacre's proffered case with a practised readiness, "you see a man of the world should be able to talk to parsons as well as other people; a parson, Sir," relapsing into his conversational style, "is a gentleman by his cloth, and though, from what I've seen in this country, a man might easily afford not to know them out here, yet at home a clergy acquaintance is very respectable. Besides, you see," lowering his voice to a more confidential key,—"I find it all in my line to draw people out; how am I to write about the clergy of this country without facts to go upon? Why, Sir, Mr. Wallace, there, will make a capital subject: 'The Anglo-Indian clergy,' we

may say, 'a dignified, pious, hard-working body, but unhappily almost universally infected with the Tractarian leaven.'"

"Ah!" said Mr. Dacre, "you mean Puseyites and all that; well, I don't know much about them, but I should have thought that the padrés I've seen out here didn't care much about that sort of thing either way; however, I'm rather tired of talking about parsons; take some more brandy and water."

Mr. Malone looked with scarcely disguised contempt upon his entirely unintellectual companion; he made him more his confidant than anybody else, because he liked to talk about himself, and Lieut. Dacre he thought was too great a fool, and too lazy, to remember what he was told, or repeat it if he did; and he also liked his brandy and water and cheroots.

These two men were very much alike in their sensual developments, and yet, because Mr. Malone was rather a clever man, he felt himself fully able to despise his companion, who was a blockhead. Strange, but stranger still that he really was far the better man of the two, even by the force of that rather low intelligence. Stupidity is always worse than wit, when both are dissevered from principle.

We will leave these two smoking and drinking,

Mr. Malone holding forth the while in a fervent strain of continued self-glorification, and join the other three passengers, who were again reduced to the sailor's pastime of walking the deck. Oakfield and Mr. Middleton, it will be remembered, had left the cabin when Mr. Wallace began his white-ticish disquisition, and had resumed the conversation which tiffin had interrupted.

"Well," said Oakfield, after Mr. Middleton had gone over what he had said before, "I understand your two problems, and admit their absorbing importance, but have you any clue to hold out towards the solution?"

"The solution of a problem like that can hardly be stated categorically; it is the work of our lives, of yours and mine, to solve it; or rather to make some approach to it, for he who really does solve it will be the great man of India. The solution of it will be a revelation made to us by some man of genius; the great business for ordinary honest workers is pioneering, trying to clear away some of the jungle of falsehood and absurdity which might stop the hero, or impede him, when he does come."

"I confess," Oakfield replied, "that there seems to me the old want in all this, a want of capability of being practically applied. I came out to this country with vague general notions of a great work

of civilisation and reform, calling for labourers, and so on; but I find this notion fade entirely away before the stupid realities of daily life; and now you tell me of problems to be solved and falsehoods to be protested against; and I recognise, as I said before, a ring of truth in your language; I follow you as you go along, but when I say to myself, how am I to apply all this problem? how do you work at it? when? where?" —

He spoke impatiently and stopped abruptly.

"Do not confuse yourself with that word 'practically,'" said Mr. Middleton, in a quiet voice, contrasting with his companion's vehemence; "the practical business of your life is always to do the duty before you well; that sounds old enough — and it *is* old and true; my practical business is to do my magisterial district work well, yours principally to do your officer's work well, — better, let me tell you, than it is often done by those of your cloth, if report says true; but you must have, if your life is to be worth anything, you must have an idea to be looked upon as a fixed star, far beyond, yet guiding and influencing your practical every-day business. The idea of a man's life cannot be reduced to a mere tangibility which is what is generally meant when people clamour for 'something practical;' it is not that which you can take in hand any morning, take a day's work at, and

have done with; still less is it anything fanciful or unreal. It is most real; it is what you must work at always; work at nothing without working at it; you should labour to become so imbued with it that it may colour your least actions almost without your being conscious of it: practical! all your practice should be nothing else than a constant hammering out of your idea. See now: we have reduced, for shortness sake, the question of our position in India here into two main heads; the existence or non-existence of a radical sympathy between the European and Asiatic man, and the cause of the degraded state of English society out here, with the means of cure; if you are prepared to look at the thing in this light, to adopt these questions as your own, then I say get them so impressed upon you, or something equivalent to them, that they may be a centre round which all your busy life shall revolve. If you get up every morning thinking 'this is what I am set to find out,' if you carry this into your work, into all your dealings both with society and the natives, you will find it practical enough — never fear."

"In short, have fixed ideas as the religion of one's work."

"Exactly so, but the word 'fixed' is incorrect, though I believe I used it in the same way myself just now. These two questions which I have

stated, or any other two or two hundred questions which you may state for yourself, will not remain *fixed;* or if the nucleus of them is fixed, rooted in Eternal Truth, their halo, which is to you their principal feature, will be ever changing colour; as you think you have grasped it, dissolving into some other shape or hue: this is not to be regretted;—motion, or progress, though the word has been injured by cant, is the salt of the soul's life; if we had a finite object we might reach it, and stop, and stopping, decay;—but as it is, forward!—I say at any rate," Mr. Middleton resumed in the same animated tone, pacing the deck with a firmer, quicker step—"at any rate in God's name think *something;* hope something; look forward to something. The most Utopian dream that ever deceived an enthusiast, if believed, kept in view, and steadily steered for, makes the dreamer better and wiser than those sober-minded men who shape their course merely so far as the fog bank clearing up day by day enables them to do. But join a clear vision to sober-mindedness: exercise your reason, your judgment, even your taste, for it is permitted you, in selecting an object; but selected, believe in, and make for it. If you like my view of life in India, take it; if not, then another; but take one: I do not say that all are equally true, but all are truer than none. To go through life

without an idea at all, that is latitudinarianism, and a hateful ruinous vice it is."

"What are you saying about latitudinarianism?" asked Mr. Wallace, who had by this time joined them with the soliloquy recorded above; "ah yes, Sir, it is the vice of the age."

Mr. Middleton immediately shut up; he was naturally a reserved man, though the reader may be inclined to think otherwise, from his openness with Oakfield, but there was a subdued earnestness about this latter's manner and countenance which bore, more forcibly than his mourning costume, the mark of his late sorrowful vigils; there was too a frankness, and a desire for truth and for help, so manifest in his unaffected tone and words, which, combined with his youth and profession, made a great impression upon Mr. Middleton, himself an honest able man, well known in the service as a first-rate officer, winning respect and popularity amongst all his neighbours at every station he went to, by his well-known literary taste, and above all by that powerful spell of unfussing (pardon the word) strong earnestness which is always admired, though seldom recognised for what it is, by the poor majority, who feel painfully the burden of their own bustling idleness. Mr. Middleton had been rather more excited than was usual with him, in the latter part of his con-

versation with Oakfield, and did not feel disposed for the wet blanket of orthodoxy; his first impulse was to sheer off altogether; reflecting, however, on the questionable civility of such a step, and the unfairness of deserting Oakfield, he faced about again and said, "We were agreeing, Mr. Wallace, or at any rate I was asserting, and I think Mr. Oakfield was inclined to agree with me" (Oakfield nodded), "how essential it is for a man to get some prevalent idea to start with, and to steer upon, and were also discussing India and its prospects, and our position in it. Rather grand questions, Mr. Wallace, are they not, to be disposed of summarily on the quarter deck of a Ganges steamer?"

"The prospects of India," echoed Mr. Wallace, "surely they depend upon the prospects of the church in India."

"Then they must be rather gloomy."

"Gloomy they certainly are," said Mr. Wallace, "but improving. The better spirit in church matters which has been abroad lately, has not been without its effect even in India."

"You mean, I suppose, by the church in India," said Mr. Middleton, "the ecclesiastical establishment in this country?"

"I mean the church, the one true church of England, as legally appointed in this country, with

its three essential orders of Bishop, Priests, and Deacons!"

"And you mean that the chaplains and assistant chaplains, some thirty clergymen scattered over this large presidency, are the main influence by which India is to be regenerated?"

"I certainly believe, Sir, and so I trust do you also, that Christianity is the great means by which what you call the regeneration of India (though I rather demur to the term) is to be effected."

"In the first place," Oakfield observed, "are Christianity and the ecclesiastical establishment of the Bengal presidency convertible terms?"

"You do not mean to deny, I trust, Sir, that the ecclesiastical establishment is a Christian establishment?"

"Come, come," said Mr. Middleton, "that is hardly a fair interpretation of Mr. Oakfield's question, which was a very pertinent one; but passing that, I would not shrink from saying that Christianity is, in my opinion, *not* the main instrument to be used; that is in the first instance."

"Good God, Sir!—I ask pardon for using such an expression,—but really, Sir, do you call yourself a Christian, that you use such language?"

"I trust so," said Mr. Middleton, quietly; "but I certainly should not be one, if I thought

Christianity was or could possibly be at variance with truth."

"Christianity is truth, Sir."

"But all truth is not Christianity," said Oakfield.

"Your Oxford logic comes in very much to the purpose," said Mr. Middleton, laughing; "depend upon it, Sir, that Christianity, which is the highest truth and the highest wisdom, will never be found at variance with a *fact*, or allied in any way with foolishness."

"How do you mean at variance with a fact?"

"I would ask you, has Christianity had any effect upon this country; I do not mean in individual cases, but at all, nationally: does it have any effect?"

"It has not had a fair trial."

"I grant you; but if the Church Missionary Society sent out an army of missionaries, do you really think that it would have much — that it would have *any* effect upon the natives?"

"I should not select the Church Missionary Society to make the experiment."

"Oh! I forgot," said Mr. Middleton, impatiently, "you consider them unorthodox; well, for Church Missionary read Propagation Society, and then,"—

"Then I do think the conversions would be-

come numerous to an extent you at present can hardly imagine."

"I doubt the fact; but admitting it, what are your conversions? you convert them to a creed, and make them—what? at best the same respectable, mammon-worshipping, godless men that so large a majority of our own Christian countrymen are. Admitting you could do this—a most liberal, and as I think gratuitous admission,—you have only done worse than nothing. Christianity is to you and me,—it was once to a world,—the greatest conceivable, the most powerfully constraining motive to men to become religious; but then Christianity was the Evangel, the good tidings, essentially the new impulse, the strange radical intruder upon old ideas; to say that the Christian *creed*, (only mark the difference between the two words—evangel and creed), as now daily and controversially insisted upon by a few professors, is the same thing as Christianity announced to and emphatically received by a whole world, is to deny fact,—is adverse to truth, and therefore adverse to Christianity itself."

"Oh! I see, Sir; you are one of those who look upon Christianity as a by-gone exploded thing, all very well in its day, but too slow for this enlightened nineteenth century."

Oakfield waited with some anxiety for Mr. Middleton's reply.

"God forbid," he said solemnly, "that I should think so; but I do think that the age of dogmas and creeds is gone by; at any rate, their power is gone, even if their ghosts remain for our sins, to irritate and perplex mankind."

"And yet you say that Christianity is not the great influence by which the Indian people is to be effected."

"In the first place, most assuredly not; Christianity is not a piece of conjuring, which you only have to announce, for its magical effects to appear. It is a wonderful development of intellectual and spiritual life, which those who have no such life, or only in the smallest possible degree, can neither appreciate nor need. To preach Christianity to the natives of India, is to begin at the end. Physical improvement first, then intellectual, then spiritual, that seems the natural order of things; and if it is the natural order, that is to say the true one, fixed by the laws of the universe, then whole universities of missionaries will not alter it."

"Well, Mr. Middleton, I am surprised to hear you talk so; you can hardly expect me, as a clergyman, either to agree, or discuss the matter farther with you on this ground. I confess I have been accustomed to regard God's truth, as revealed in the Christian religion, to be of universal application through the instrumentality of the church.

I thought that what all good men looked forward to for India, was the admission of its people into the bosom of that church; I have even been accustomed to anticipate a time, distant though it may be, when the towers and spires of the outward temples of God shall mark the face of this land, emblematical of the inward temple which shall be in the hearts of its converted inhabitants; but you seem to think all this a consummation not to be looked, scarcely to be hoped for."

"I am sorry we got on the subject," said Mr. Middleton to Oakfield, as the good clergyman, deeply moved, walked away; "I might have known I should shock him, however careful: and yet I am sure I did not wish to, for he too has an idea, though a strangely impracticable one to my mind. However, we have had enough of this for one day, and perhaps too much. I am not always such a sermoniser, Mr. Oakfield, as you may think from the way you have heard me going on to-day."

Oakfield smiled. "You have preached greatly to my satisfaction I assure you,—and yet I was not quite prepared for what you said on this last subject. I should be grieved indeed to think that you should give up Christianity because you believe in religion, as seems to be so often the case now-a-days; and that perhaps because so many do not believe in religion, who profess Christianity. And

yet surely I do and will believe, that Christianity is the highest truth we are yet capable of knowing."

"Be assured I think so too; only it is still subject to the conditions of humanity, and it is doing no service to sacrifice fact to it; it must be sought out by human means, and when spread abroad, if it is to be worth anything, grounded upon honest foundations deeply laid in human nature; and it takes a long time, and far other means than church missionary societies afford, to lay these. And that Christianity should be spread over Asia as it was over Europe, as a matter of opinion at best, generally as a mere superficial fashion of speech, seems to me not a desirable object, but one most entirely to be dreaded, one which all honest people should labour to prevent, even though they should seem to many good men, like Mr. Wallace for instance, to be no better than infidels for so doing. But I say I positively will not preach any more;" and he turned round rather abruptly, and entered the cabin.

Here they all met again at dinner, and sat late listening to Mr. Malone, who was in one of his most amusing moods. He was certainly rather under the influence of brandy, but only sufficiently so to develope his brogue, sharpen his wits, and perhaps slightly diminish his caution about himself,

which was more an assumed habit than a natural peculiarity.

He talked with an air of intimate acquaintance of the principal London Journals, and was so well informed in the mysteries of newspaper 'shop' that it was evident he had been connected in some way with one or more of them.

He spoke familiarly of 'Barnes,' 'Wilkinson,' 'Walter,' and other editors, and hinted at the great esteem in which they all agreed to hold him, Malone. He delighted in the Peerage, introduced the name of an Earl or a Marquis in every story he told, rolling out the full title with an unctuous enjoyment, and inserting the pedigree and family history in parenthesis; still evinced the same wonderful partial acquaintance with everybody, so that scarcely a name could be mentioned which he would not recognise, and ferret out of his marvellous memory some trait of the actual owner of it, or at least describe some near relation; he hinted at the importance of his present literary labours, and the castigation which he had inflicted, or was about to inflict, upon divers individuals and institutions in India; spoke in continual glorification of, firstly, himself,—secondly, the aristocracy,—thirdly, the fourth estate: which two last were jumbled up in his affections in a queer incongruous fashion, so that it might be said of him,

that his flunkeyism and love of titles made him a staunch Tory in profession, while his self-interest led him continually into most ultra-radical declamations on the power and splendour of the press; he still carried out his principle of adapting his conversation to his auditors with a clumsy and most amusing palpability; "talked religion" to Mr. Wallace, who, however, had become cautious since the unfortunate result of confidence at tiffin; spoke of India to Mr. Middleton, making remarks upon the country, which evinced the strangest combination of shrewd observation and profound ignorance; discussed the respective merits of different cheroots with Lieutenant Dacre, while to Oakfield he still enlarged upon his "poor papa," his own magnificent prospects, and the capability of improvement that there was in the "Leatheburn Estates."

Altogether Oakfield enjoyed his voyage up the Ganges, and was sorry when they came to Allahabad: the climate was perfect, Mr. Malone was amusing, the clergyman kind and gentlemanly, the Lieutenant perfectly innocuous, and Mr. Middleton one whom he was most sorry to part from.

They reached Allahabad in the middle of January, just at the time when the great annual fair is held at that most holy spot, where the waters of the Ganges and the Jumna join.

The confluence of two large rivers is always striking; that of the Ganges and Jumna in particular, seems to bring before the mind the one greatest feature in the geography of Northern India; but now this interest was almost lost in the marvel of the enthusiastic thousands, who from all parts of India were gathered together to the worship of the sacred streams.

"Look at us here," said Mr. Middleton to Oakfield, "on board this steamer, and there at those multitudes, engaged in their harsh-sounding, unpleasing, but animated devotion, and you will see the problem we were speaking of the other day, stated broadly enough. What an inconceivable separation there apparently and actually is between us few English silently making a servant of the Ganges with our steam-engines and paddle-floats, and those Asiatics, with shouts and screams worshipping the same river: the separation, I say, is obvious and quite tremendous. Is there any common ground underneath it?"

Oakfield looked thoughtfully at the new strange scene—"Yes," he answered—"There is thought for a lifetime in that question, I believe; mainspring strong enough to set in motion a long chain of work; I have to thank you very heartily, Mr. Middleton, for giving me some distinct shape in which to put the question of life."

"Well," he added, "we must go ashore, I suppose; shall I meet you at Berrill's hotel?"

"No; I am going to stay with a friend and shall go on as soon as I can lay a dák;* there is no knowing, Mr. Oakfield, how short or how long a time it may be before we meet again in the North West, but if ever you do come to Ferozepoor, it will give me very sincere pleasure to renew the friendship which has begun so pleasantly."

The obvious sincerity with which this was spoken, and the use of so strong a word as friendship, from a reserved man, was very pleasing to Oakfield. They shook hands warmly and parted.

"Good bye, Sir, good bye!" These words, spoken in the loud Irish unmistakeable tones of Mr. Malone, startled Oakfield, as he stood looking, in a pondering way, over the side of the vessel. "Good bye, Sir! Remember me to your good mamma when you write. I dare say I shall see her before you do, and shall tell her that I had the pleasure of meeting you, and what a steady young man you seemed. Good bye, Sir!" And off he went to the dák bungalow, while Oakfield betook himself to Berrill's hotel.

* Dák means post. Laying a dák is having relays of bearers stationed at stages ten or twelve miles apart, to take up the traveller's palanquin and carry it forward without delay.

CHAP. IX.

"One year has now elapsed
And time has laid his hand upon this scene.
Once more the memorable village rears
Her peaceful walls and unpolluted cells;
And o'er those plains which charging squadrons shook,
Where iron tempests rained, the simple plough-share
With its steer has passed, and smiling crops invite
The reaper's toil."

P.

Lines written at Ferozeshah, one year after the battle of that place.

When Oakfield reached Berrill's hotel, he heard the great news which was then in the very act of traversing India, that the Sikhs had been finally repulsed beyond the Sutlej, and the British dominion effectually asserted on the frontier, by the decisive action of Sobraon. He heard that the army was to be immediately broken up; but the destination of regiments was not yet specified. He waited, therefore, at Allahabad, to hear where his own corps should be ordered to, and meanwhile expected, with some anxiety, accounts from Stanton, to whom, since his departure from Hajeepoor, he had written several times without

receiving any reply. At last the following epistle came to set his friendly fears at rest.

"LAHORE, 21st FEB. 1846.

"MY DEAR OAKFIELD,

"I really am ashamed at not having written to you before; and I am afraid to think how savage you must be! Thank you, my dear fellow, for the kind notes I have received from you. You will forgive me when you have experienced, as I hope you will some day, how great a bore it is sitting down to write long letters in camp; and more especially during the excitement and difficulties of a campaign.

"I had resolved to give you a good long letter when all this business was over, but after trumpeting each action as it occurred, for the gratification of my anxious friends at home (my own share in each forming of course the pith of the narrative), you may conceive how disagreeable it must be to go over the story immediately for the third or fourth time. But now, while our gallant old chief is in the act, as they will say at home, 'of dictating peace under the walls of Lahore,' and we are permitted, for the present, 'to repose on our laurels,' I will endeavour to give you a sketch of what has occurred since you last heard of me, at Umballa, and of the scenes I have passed through in our march to this place.

"My troop, as you know or ought to know from the papers, marched with the force from Umballa, on the 11th of December. How delighted we were with the near prospect of our long-talked-of encounter with

the Sikhs; and when we heard, a few days afterwards, that they had actually had the presumption to cross the river, and threaten Ferozepore, and were at that moment hovering over the country, only a few miles-a-head of us, like a swarm of locusts, there was one grand prayer throughout the camp, that they only would not—go back again! I laugh at *our* presumption now.

"Well: I pass over our six days' forced marching: there was enough to cheer us on for sixty, if it had been necessary. The Loodeana force joined us, as you know, on the evening of the 17th. The next evening proved to us the incalculable advantage of this movement, and how disastrous the consequences might, and probably would have been, of the Sikhs attacking, as they undoubtedly should have done, either of these positions of the army singly.

"Our march on the morning of the 18th was diversified by the presence of parties of the enemy's horse. These were driven in as we proceeded, and as our advance guard entered the town of Moodkee, about one o'clock, the garrison of the small fort there very quietly took its departure. Each regiment had halted in its position, for encamping, in the line marked out for the army; and we (the artillery), after picketing our horses, had assembled, now about half-past two p. m., to refresh ourselves, after our long morning's march, with some mess stores which very opportunely made their appearance. Poor old General Sale joined us at this moment, and we were in the middle of rather an

exciting debate about the probability of our being soon in contact with the Sikhs, when suddenly the whole camp was startled by the 'alarm' from drum and trumpet; and the intelligence flew along the line, that the enemy was advancing in force upon us. Up we all sprang: on went our jackets again; while our tired horses were harnessed quicker than they had ever been before; and, accompanied by the calvary on either flank, the horse artillery and field batteries dashed to the front. I remembered and again experienced my feelings on first going into action, some years ago, at Maharajpore. How the cheek burns and the heart leaps at the thought that the scenes now about to be witnessed, and the deeds now to be done, may become for ever memorable! And besides this there is, as others know as well as soldiers, a stern satisfaction in meeting a duty that may be full of pain and peril, but is certainly one of self-denying vigour. On arriving at a belt of jungle, some distance from camp, we found ourselves under the fire of the enemy's guns. Here we halted and opened in return. Meanwhile the Infantry was advancing. The principal circumstances of this eventful evening you are already acquainted with, from the despatches and other accounts in the newspapers, so I will not fatigue you with all that happened to my particular troop. It was quite dark when the engagement was over, and as yet we could only guess that the day was in our favour. We heard the horse artillery 'recall,' and, following the direction, soon fell in with some other troops of

horse artillery and cavalry, on their way back to camp. This is always the depressing part of the business, when enquiries come to be made, and while the 'glory' of our success is still obscured by the immediate suffering of those about us, who are not destined to share in it. We made our way slowly back to camp; our gun-carriages and waggons now laden with the wounded and dying.

"The two next days were passed in a defensive attitude and preparing for a decisive co-operation with the Ferozepore garrison. At four o'clock on the morning of the 21st the army was in motion. The strength of each division and its position for the march of attack on the following day had been all notified the evening previous. It was pitch dark at the hour I have mentioned, and we had no small difficulty in getting into our place. 'Do you see that star?' said an aide-de-camp, in answer to the enquiries of our captain, as we were moving from our pickets, not knowing exactly where to go; 'well, follow its direction, and you will come upon the rear of Gilbert's division.' As we moved along, the low indistinct hum, from black motionless masses, or the faint tramp of passing regiments was all we could distinguish. Soon the dawn brought everything into order, and the army commenced its march. At noon there was a long halt, and we received the gratifying intelligence that the hitherto beleaguered force in Ferozepore had given the enemy the slip, and were within hail. We now appeared to turn off almost at right angles from

our former course, and after moving some distance to the right, the horse artillery were ordered to the front and the infantry deployed into line. The army now advanced to that memorable attack, and soon the roaring of the guns from the Ferozepore division assured us of the presence of the enemy. Again I must refer you to official sources for the particulars of the severe combat which ensued. Our small field guns, as you must have heard, proved to be incapable, either from their position or their force, of silencing the batteries of the enemy, which seemed to sweep almost every yard of the ground we advanced over. Night closed in, but not as usual, with our army alone in possession of the field.

"I shall never forget that night; it was bitterly cold; we were all tired, hungry, and thirsty, but there was not a drop of water to be got, even for the wounded. We collected some sticks together and made a small fire, and those poor wretches near us who were able, crawled, some of them to die, beside it. If men spoke of the events of the afternoon it was with gloom, and we looked forward to what might transpire on the morrow with more hope than confidence. The rattle of musketry every now and then disturbed the silence and almost apathy into which we sank. Flashes from the Sikh intrenchment, where part of their camp was burning, lit up for a short space the dense darkness of the night, and the shades of the surrounding trees. Towards morning, in spite of the cold, against which there was no resource, I

somehow fell asleep. As soon as day broke we were in motion, and I will venture to say of all of us, that we never felt so anxious to be engaged with the enemy. We were not long in suspense. Tej Singh had moved from in front of the now almost deserted cantonment of Ferozepore, and his long line of troops was the first position of the enemy that attracted our attention this morning. Soon his guns opened upon us, and we (*i. e.* about four troops, H. A., and two field batteries) returned it while our ammunition lasted, and this was the severest fire I was under during the campaign. The ammunition left from yesterday's encounter being soon completely expended, we sheered off, fortunately in time to avoid being literally smashed! We withdrew to the left flank of the intrenchments, along which our Infantry were now advancing, carrying every thing before them.

"This severe engagement terminated at about three o'clock on the afternoon of the 22nd December; but before we were conscious of the result, though after the firing had ceased on both sides, the cavalry and artillery received orders to form up and move into Ferozepore. It now appears that the 'best authority' had not been obtained for this order, and the movement has in consequence been severely censured. However this may be, the movement of so large a body of cavalry and artillery apparently towards the enemy's right flank, had all the appearance of exercising no little influence on his counsels, for, either dispirited with the loss of his intrenchments and guns, or in despair at the appearance of another

attack, the necessity and fact of his retreat from this moment became obvious. It was after sunset when we reached Ferozepore. Some of our horses dropped dead when we halted. They had had neither food nor water since the evening of the 20th, and this was the night of the 22nd, with hard work throughout the whole time. In this condition, and without a round shot in our ammunition boxes, we could have been only an encumbrance to our troops in the field. It was quite dark when we had parked our guns. I sat down on one of them and soon found myself alone. 'How is this to end?' was the first thought that suggested itself to me; and on this I very fruitlessly cogitated for an hour or more. It was getting cold, however, and I had eaten and drunk nothing since the middle of the day previous. I entered the first tent I came to, for the Ferozepore force had left their camp standing. A young fellow was lying on the bed delirious, with the stump of an arm still undressed, though shot off the day before, projecting from under the bed-clothes, beseeching a brother officer who sat by his side, in the most piteous accents, 'not to leave him on the field,' for his mind still wandered to that scene of horror. I soon hit upon a brother blue-jacket's tent, where I satisfied my craving appetite, and oh! the luxury of pulling off one's boots and *determining* to enjoy a few hours' undisturbed repose!

"Early the next morning, the 28th, the horse artillery, having re-filled their ammunition boxes from the Ferozepore magazine, rejoined, with the cavalry,

the rest of the army which was now in sole possession of the guns, the wounded, and the dead, which seemed to fill the entrenchments of Ferozeshah. The enemy were by this time some miles away in a precipitate retreat. I must carry you quickly over the time which elapsed, with only the brilliant little action of Alliwal intervening, with all the particulars and causes of this delay in our operations, from the morning after the bloodily-contested two days' battle which I have just sketched, until the evening before our crowning victory at Sobraon. You are aware of the nature and strength of the position which the Sikhs now occupied. The whole of the 9th of February was passed by the artillery in preparing shells and ammunition for the next day's contest. My troop moved from its pickets at about three in the morning, and falling in with the division to which it had been attached by the orders of the night previous, we moved on slowly in the dark to occupy our position in the line of attack. This is not a time when one feels inclined to talk much; moving through the dark never is. The fires from our camp and the villages about threw a wildness over our movement; and as we proceeded on our way, the hum of preparation which floated over our large encampment, gradually became less distinct. How fancies crowd upon the mind when there is nothing outward to satisfy the eye and ear!

"This day, we say, will become memorable for a glorious victory; no doubt—but not to all! And then there is an effort to picture the scenes which are to follow, and to anticipate the events which must be

revealed before the day closes. We were in our position, and lying on the ground some hours before the action opened. The morning was very foggy, but as the sun gained strength, the mist rose gradually like a curtain, opening to our view the high and well-constructed entrenchments of the Sikhs. Behind them the Sutlej flowed tranquilly, and the white banks of the opposite shore, fringed with trees, shut in the scene. As soon as the heavy guns in the centre opened their fire, the Sikhs seemed for the first time to be awakened to a full consciousness of their position; and I can imagine no more beautiful sight than must have presented itself to them,' when on every side as far as eye could penetrate the jungle, they watched in their immovable order the glittering ranks of the British army. For a short time only a continual roll of alarm from their drums betokened their surprise and the hurry of preparation, and then one after another each embrasure vomited its token of defiance, till ere long, as Sir Hugh Gough describes it, 'the roar of more than 120 pieces of ordnance reverberated through the valley of the Sutlej.'

"The particulars of the day you know. The advance of Dick's division on the Sikhs' right was magnificent, and as we know now, should have been the principal, and perhaps the only point of attack. Our heavy guns of course, from their position (thanks to those who had the placing of them), could not do much either to ruin the Sikh defences or to lessen the fire from them. But how we peppered their masses

as they retreated over the sinking bridge and through the river in rear of their position, after our infantry had gained an entrance and carried it at the point of the bayonet! The massacre was really frightful; too much so to tempt one to a detailed description of it. By two o'clock not a Sikh, I believe, was visible, except the dying and dead, who were lying in thousands in their entrenchments, or floating down the river. I must now bring this long account to a close. We crossed the Sutlej in pursuit at Ferozepore, as you know, and arrived at the capital of the Punjab yesterday morning. I believe we are to have a grand review here in a day or two, to show off our force to the Sikh Court. It ought to be rather a good display, considering that we have a greater number of European regiments with the army than India has ever before seen together. And fancy, besides a very fine train of heavy guns drawn by elephants, and several field batteries, eleven of our troops of horse artillery marching past one after another in review order! What would the Cockneys say to this, who flock in thousands to see a couple of regiments on parade, or half a dozen guns on Woolwich Common? Well, my dear Oakfield, I must really fold up this long-winded despatch. I hope you are satisfied with this amends for my past laziness. Meanwhile you have been witnessing death in a milder and perhaps a more impressive form. I thought when last I saw poor little Vernon that he was not long for this world.

"Believe me ever most affectionately yours,

"H. Stanton."

CHAP. X.

"Hail ancient manners! sure defence
Where ye exist of wholesome laws:
Remnants of love, whose modest sense
Within a narrow room withdraws;
Hail usages of pristine mould,
And ye who guard them, Mountains old!"

WORDSWORTH.

It was some three or four months after Oakfield's landing at Allahabad, the month of June, which is to Indians the reign of terror, to those who sit at home at ease the first-fruits of delight, that an open carriage and pair might have been seen leaving the entrance of St. John's Vale on the right, and taking the road for Keswick. There were two grown people seated in the place of honour, opposite whom sat a boy some twelve or thirteen years old, whose youthful animation and high spirits contrasted strikingly with the calm expression derived from the smoothly-cut outline of his features and his silky dark hair; and the party was completed by two little girls, who stood and sat and climbed about quite promiscuously all over the carriage, consistent in nothing for two minutes

together, except their continual, unflagging, laughing, loving, happiness. That it was a party of pleasure was clear, and that in the fullest extent of the term, to all concerned. The elder lady, at she leaned back, listened with silent pleasure to the raptures of the little ones, herself ready to share in their enthusiasm at the surpassing and varying beauty which each turn of the road disclosed,—the object of the conversation, the affection, the thoughtful attention of all, looked the very picture of tranquil enjoyment; the young lady, our old friend Margaret, had she been less pretty than she really was, with her graceful figure and soft complexion, dark hair, and the large expressive eyes which characterised her family, would have looked beautiful to any one who had observed her with her mother and the little ones; evidently the friend and support of the former, the idol of the latter; while the same desire to please and amuse was tempered in the case of her brother by an unconscious tone of confidence and equality which her delicate instinct taught her would be most soothing to the susceptible feelings of a Winchester boy of thirteen. But perhaps a narrow observer would have been most pleased with the genial and wholesome effect which the atmosphere of family love might be seen to have upon this boy. He was at home

from Winchester for his first holidays amongst his mother and sisters, and must have been a very paragon of a boy had he returned exactly what he went. His watchful mother saw with hopeful anxiety symptoms here and there of decaying childhood and incipient manliness; and if it sometimes appeared that the strengthening, developing influence of public school discipline could not be altogether untainted by some concomitant coarseness, the stains were not so deep but that they altogether melted away before the grateful heat of home affection and home purity. If he was less ready than he would have been six months before to share in the childish games of his little sisters, his mother was rejoiced to see that he was not impatient of them, and that after watching what a hearty playfellow Margaret was to them, he would swallow down the slight sticklings of dignity, and give himself up to the play of two little girls of five and six with an energy that would have astonished some of his friends in Commoners.

At the time we have introduced them, all five were engaged in what appeared to be a game of staring. The children, with a preternatural silence, looked as steadily as they could in one direction, such steadiness not being sufficient, however, to keep them from turning round about twenty times in a minute to exclaim, "Mamma,

have you seen it?" Herbert, with a befitting earnestness, never once turned his eyes from the direction which seemed to have such attraction for them all; and as this direction was just in front of the horses' heads, Mrs. Oakfield and Margaret could join in the contemplation without the uncomfortable attitudinising in which the little ones seemed to delight, and which poor Herbert bore with stoical patience. At last, "I see it!" said Herbert, in a tone that all his efforts could not prevent from being a shout.

"Herby's first, Herby's first," screamed Rose, her tiny face glowing with excitement through the long hair which had escaped from her straw hat and was flying about in most unartificial tresses. "Where, Herby?" she said, scrambling up to her brother's side.

"There it is," said Herbert, pointing to the little portion of Derwent Water which had just become visible; "we shall see the whole lake from the top of the next hill."

"Herby always sees things first;" said Mary, rather dolorously.

As Herby had predicted, from the next hill the whole lake became visible, and now the eyes of all were fixed as they came to the brow overlooking Keswick. Mother, son, daughters, in all their different degrees of age, association, and senti-

ment, held their peace as they looked down upon the gorgeous silence of Derwent Water and Bassenthwaite valleys. Slowly did the careful post-boy descend the triangularly-cut, but still steep, hill, so that our enthusiasts had time to gaze their fill over the wonderful landscape; and it was not without a sense of relief that the sudden jerk as they pulled up at the turnpike to take the drag off, and then rattled on over the loud pavement, dispelled the almost solemn trance in which young and old had been wrapped as they descended the hill. Surely there is a great deal of religion in such hill-descendings; more, says Carlyle, than we most of us know what to do with. But Rose and Mary's religious admiration fits were not the less genuine that they were of brief duration, and by the time they had pulled up at the Queen's Head they were quite alive to the novelty of passing an hour or two at an inn.

Keswick is almost a bye word with north country travellers for a quiet rustic town, but to our north-country dwellers it was a noisy metropolis. To all except Mrs. Oakfield, who had seen much of the world before she found her peaceful home among the mountains, and Master Herbert, who had nothing to say for Keswick as a town, having seen not only Winchester, but the great London. Keswick was as big a town to

Margaret as it was to Rose and Mary. They did not stay long at the inn, but went down to the head of the lake, and took a boat. It was a perfect day, calm and cloudless; the hills of Borrowdale had relaxed that stern expression which they often wear, the Catbells looked no more than great sunny slopes, Skiddaw "shrouded his double head" not in "Atlantic clouds," but in the soft haze of a summer sky, the blue lake and its wooded green islands made up the exquisitely finished miniature. Though it is but a dead metaphor to compare a beautiful scene like this to a picture; the charm does not consist in the mere shapes and colours which delight the eye; but in the moving sounding water, the clear freshness of mountain air, the happy bounding life of man, and bird, and beast, all expanding to enjoy the purest and perhaps the most perfect of all earthly pleasures, a fine day in a beautiful country. They were obliged to take a boatman to help Herby to row the party, otherwise Mrs. Oakfield would not have thought it necessary, on so calm a day, to hurt the latter's feelings by appearing to want any other protector; but as Herby himself said rather grandly, "I can never pull all of you to Lowdore and back, you know," and as Rose and Mary could not get the party to put proper reliance on their promise of assistance, they took with them one of the good-

natured, strong-armed Backhouses or Tysons that stood on the wooden pier, to pull bow to Herby's stroke. The cushions were arranged, *the* basket stowed away under Herbert's superintendence, and off they went; Margaret steered at first, but it must be owned so widely, that her brother was obliged to ask her to unship the rudder; poor Mrs. Oakfield would have enjoyed the cool ripple of the boat in the blue silky water more thoroughly, had it not been for the purgatory of fear which Rose and Mary caused her. Regardless of injunctions to sit still, and Herbert's nautical, and to them, utterly incomprehensible request, "to trim," they would clamber about the boat as they had done in the carriage. After all, the good, honest, broad-bottomed old tub was nearly as safe a play-room as the carriage; but Herby's distress at having the symmetry of his rowing destroyed by such unsailor-like conduct, induced the good Margaret to get the two little girls to come and sit by her, and be told a story. It was a wonderful story, that of Margaret's, a standing chronicle of the fortunes of a little boy and girl, whose biographies had, since the time Margaret was herself a child, been continually receiving additional chapters. It had done its work for Edward, Margaret, and Herbert, and now the Boswellian mantle had descended from mother to daughter,

who, for the benefit of the little ones, was ever leading the hero and heroine into bewildering predicaments, till the compassionate little Mary's distress became so great that they were brought out again abruptly. This biography was a charm that could still the most troubled waters, so long as the hearers were only noisy, and it was wanted to quiet them; if they were naughty, which the dear little things of course were sometimes, it was never tried; it was mingled only with their "good" associations. So they sat down immediately, with ready attentive ears, to the great relief of Herby, and the amusement of the old boatman, who loved children, and admired this innocent dodge; and really these little things were not wrong to be enticed; it must have been very pleasant sitting at the bottom of that great comfortable boat, sailing over Derwent Water, looking up to Margaret's soft eyes, hearing her gentle merry voice, as she made a most important and wonderfully unconnected addition to that marvellous story, though the subjects of it seemed in a bad way to get on in life, poor children, for they had reached the ages of eight and nine, when Herbert deserted them for more authentic histories, and now the ruthless Margaret had pushed them back again to five and six, without the least compunction or regard to historical unity.

They reached Lowdore without let or hindrance, and observed, as they landed, another boat drawn up on the beach. This was not altogether a good omen, viewed selfishly; for the little white inn by the lake side did not look as if it would accommodate two parties of pleasure, though we all know how these hospitable, little, white inns can stretch upon occasion. When they arrived, however, and had deposited their burden, *the* basket, they found that the other party was not of very formidable strength; only a widow lady and her two little girls. Rose and Mary pricked up their ears at the sound of two little girls. They were gone up to the Falls, the landlady said, and would be back to dinner at two o'clock. It was now half-past twelve; the Oakfields had left Leatheburn very early in the morning, and they must get home to sleep.

"Well," said Herby, coming forward to take the business department; "we shall want dinner at three."

"Maybe you'll dine together then, for you know, Ma'am," turning to Mrs. Oakfield, to poor Herby's great discomfiture, "we've only one room for visitors and tourists."

"You don't call us tourists, I hope, Mrs. Fleming," Margaret exclaimed half playfully, half with a sincere Westmoreland indignation at the odious word "tourist."

"No, Miss — I don't; nobody 'll call the Oakfields of Leatheburn tourists, that have known and honoured them as long as I and mine have, but you know, Miss, you're gentle folk,—tourists or no,—and I'll have to give you this room and no other."

"We must club dinners," said Herby, just recovering from Mrs. Fleming's slight.

"Well, Sir, and I'm thinking that's what you had best do; you'll meet the lady up at the Falls, Ma'am, and you can speak to her if you think proper."

So this important matter being settled, they set out for the waterfall.

All readers of Southey, and all lake travellers know "how the waters come down from Lowdore," so we need not try a description for the sake of the very small section not included in either category. They stood all silent at the bottom of that stupendous water-course; mother and young daughters alike gazing in befitting silent admiration; till Herby began to make his way up the bed of the Falls, a possible feat in the month of June, and then little Rose and Mary's shrieks of excitement as they watched him leaping from rock to rock, and their merry laugh as he once missed his mark and came down knee deep in the clear rapid water, rang out above the roar of the torrent, a

melodious treble, all in harmony with the sonorous base of the cataract.

As they were returning to the little inn, after an hour's scramble among the rocks up the course of the fall, they fell in with the lady and the two little girls whom the landlady had mentioned; neither party was very formidable looking to the other, so Mrs. Oakfield told Herby to go up, explain how matters stood at the inn, and ask leave to join the company. Herbert performed his mission with a grace that did credit to Wykehamist manners, and the arrangement was very soon made. The lady was travelling through the lakes, it appeared, with her two little girls; had just arrived at Keswick, and intended shortly to go into Scotland, "But not," she said, "before I have found out a family in this part of the world to whom I and my little ones here all owe a deep debt of gratitude." There was a tear in her eye as she spoke —which, in connection with the deep mourning worn by herself and daughters, appealed directly to the sympathy of Mrs. Oakfield and Margaret. They were a cheerful party, however, in the little inn parlour over the poached eggs and Westmoreland ham, provided in a style which only Westmoreland and Cumberland cooks wot of; indeed it would have been hard to be melancholy, with Rose and Mary in company. They very soon struck

up an intimacy with the two little strange girls, and were the first to break through the difficulty which all had felt from not knowing each other's names, a piece of information which with true English—shall we say politeness or awkwardness?

both parties had abstained from asking or communicating. Rose, however, had no such scruples.

"What's your name, little girl?" she asked of her black-clothed light-haired blue-eyed playfellow.

"My name's Emily," replied the ready little informant; "and hers," pointing to her sister, "is Edith; Emily Augusta Vernon is my name."

"Vernon!" Margaret half exclaimed, as the name caught her ear, with a glance at her mother, who appeared equally struck; but their astonishment was small in comparison to that of Mrs. Vernon's when in reply to Emily's return question, Rose introduced herself and her sister as Rose and Mary Oakfield.

It was now Mrs. Vernon's turn to speak, "Can it be the Mrs. Oakfield whom I have made my pilgrimage here to see; was it your dear son whom my Arthur so loved, and blessed on his death-bed; my poor boy's one kind constant friend in that dreary country?"

Mrs. Oakfield had half-guessed and now understood all.

"This is indeed a strange and happy meeting, Mrs. Vernon; we all feel as if we had lost a friend in your dear son, so much had we heard of him, and so often, from Edward; we had been wanting to send you some extracts from his letters, about the friend he loved so dearly, but did not know where to send them."

"He wrote to me himself long letters, the most precious of all my possessions, except these," pointing to the children, "and my little sailor; and I thank God I have been allowed to see and bless, as I have long prayed for, those who are nearest and dearest to him; that I may thank them, as well as poor words can, for that service of his so far beyond all thanks."

"It is not for a mother," said Mrs. Oakfield, as soon as she could find utterance, "to refuse to hear her son so lovingly spoken of; but I am sure, my dear Mrs. Vernon, that Edward would be, and is, very far from thinking that you or yours owe him anything for what would have been a natural duty, had it not been most truly a labour of love. We know, and I hope you will know when you see his letters, how much this dear friend cheered, —and indeed made not bearable only, but prized and happy,—those otherwise trying months of inexperience in India; we know how grateful he felt for the lesson of that last illness and happy

death. It is most curious, in many ways, this chance meeting," continued Mrs. Oakfield, after a short interval; "this is our Edward's birth-day, and our party is in his honour. Herby, my boy, I see you are all ready to propose your brother's health, and I do not think we need omit the ceremony on Mrs. Vernon's account." This was a great relief to poor Herby, who, deeply as he had been interested in the strange recognition, would have thought the day altogether incomplete had the time-honoured custom of drinking the health of the hero of the birth-day been omitted. If ever a relic of heathenism was transmogrified into a holy act, it was now; that little circle—the very room in which they were assembled—seemed impressed with one absorbing emotion of pure self-forgetful love for an absent son, brother, friend. If Edward Oakfield, at that moment, in his hot garrison life, so far off, was oppressed by any temptation, surely there was help for him here, in this little lake-side room in Cumberland; surely if there is any such truth as "a guardian angel," and "a communion of saints," there was here a power of love and purity which, defiant of space, might rise up against and overcome and drive back into the pit that enemy which would intrude itself, even on this solemn feast-day.

Shortly after dinner they all betook themselves

to the boats again, and at Keswick the two parties separated, not however till Mrs. Vernon had agreed to come over the next day, to make a stay at Leatheburn; and the Oakfields set out on their journey home. The day, which had begun and continued in joy, ended in peace; scarcely a word was spoken; the little ones were asleep; Herby also inclined that way, after his rowing exertions; and Mrs. Oakfield and Margaret sat watching the calm beauty of the summer night. The full moon had risen over Dunmail Raise, and now in her splendour was resting on the broad bosom of Skiddaw, silvering the rugged buttresses of Blencathera. What music was needed for this harmony of sight, the rushing brooks, as they crossed them from time to time, supplied; all was beautiful, and as they entered their own wood, just detecting through the trees the waters of Thirlwater, rippling and glistening in the moonlight, they heard the little clock of Leatheburn chapel tinkling out its twelve strokes, faintly echoed in the surrounding hills; and so ended the birth-day.

CHAP. XI.

"'Why, when the world's great mind
Hath finally inclined,
Why,' you say, Critias, 'be debating still?'
* * * *
Critias, long since, I know
(For Fate decreed it so),
Long since the world hath set its heart to live,
Long since, with credulous zeal
It turns life's mighty wheel.
Still doth for labourers send."
Strayed Reveller, and other Poems, by "A."

We left Oakfield, in the beginning of March, at Berrill's Hotel, Allahabad. He had been there only a few days when he heard that his corps, the 90th, was ordered from Meerut to Ferozepore. He left Allahabad as soon as possible, but heard, on reaching Meerut, that the regiment had marched seven days previously. While meditating, in his solitary room at the dák bungalow *, what to do next, he suddenly recollected that Stanton's troop was ordered to, and had by this

* Small houses erected every forty or fifty miles along the great roads, where travellers may obtain shelter for twenty-four hours by paying a fee of one rupee.

time arrived at, Meerut, and forthwith sallied forth to discover the artillery lines. It was five o'clock,—a damp gray cold evening,—when he reached Stanton's quarters, and saw him through the glass doors of the bungalow, seated near a comfortable fire, in determined bachelor costume, reading. That glance was suggestive of the life he had been leading for ten years; "Perhaps the life I have to lead also," thought Oakfield; "well, there might be worse!" He rattled at the door, which, Indian fashion, did not shut without fastening. Stanton got up to open. "Who's there?" he called out, not able to distinguish, as he looked from the cheerful light of his own room into the increasing darkness outside. "Oakfield! delighted to see you my boy!—when did you come?—where are you staying?—your regiment has marched you know; come in—by Jove, old fellow, how glad I am to see you!" So in disjointed fashion, without waiting for a reply, he ran on, possessed by that most pleasing of all excitements—the first half hour's meeting with an old friend: it was very soon settled that Oakfield was to send to the dák bungalow for his petarahs *, and stay with Stanton for about three weeks, and

* Petarahs; small boxes of wood or tin, a pair of which slung upon a pole, and carried by one man, generally make up the luggage of a dák traveller.

then proceed by dák to Ferozepore. "You'll be there before the regiment," urged Stanton, in reply to Oakfield's suggestion, that perhaps he ought to join immediately,—"nobody expects a griff to join on the line of march with no horse, no tent, no nothing: I suppose, though, you don't consider yourself a griff any longer: you're getting on, Oakfield; you'll soon be qualified to take up your position among the Cades of this world; by the bye, how is Cade?"

"Flourishing, I believe—I hope so—I got half reconciled to all those fellows during Arthur's illness: the spark of humanity yet left in all of us blazed up a little, and its appearance softened my heart towards them."

"Humph! I suspect with all your declamations against society, and so on, you're a softer fellow than I am, Master Ned: depend upon it you owe very little sympathy to Cade and that lot. However, '*de mortuis*,'—they are all as good as dead to you; for the chances are you never see any of them again; I advise you keep your softening moods for your new regiment."

"Did you see much of them when here?"

"Not much; I dined at their mess once or twice; they've got a very good mess."

"And what do you think of them?"

"A good deal better than the 81st at any rate;

they won't drive you away from the mess as Cade and Co. did."

"Well, but positively, without comparison, how did you like them?"

"Oh, they were liked a good deal in the station, I believe."

"How did you like them?" Oakfield repeated, tacitly reproving the *answer indirect* by not taking any notice of it; the best way to treat that style of response by the bye.

"Why," said Stanton, laughing at the reproof, "I tell you I didn't see much of them, indeed very little; so had rather leave you to form your own opinion without any prepossessions, possibly false ones. Men do a lot of harm by sweeping indiscriminate sentences upon regiments, very often knowing nothing about them the while. Your regiment has a good name in the service, which is a clear gain; and if your philosophy is rather tried by some of the popular doctrines of a crack corps why it would be the same anywhere else. You musn't trust to your society in this country; nor anywhere, I believe, for that matter. Depend upon it that in our generation society will be a hinderance more than a help."

"I believe so too," said Oakfield, "but in vastly different degrees; sometimes so slight a hinderance that a strong will may almost force it into a help,

at any rate has little difficulty in overcoming it; sometimes, again, a hinderance which the strongest will hardly be able to live down; and must even cut and run for it."

"Well," replied Stanton, "it is, I believe, partly from constitutional temperament, partly from habit, that I cannot understand the importance you attach to society one way or the other. To govern oneself, to cherish one's own spiritual life, seems to be a task so essentially one's own, that a society of angels could scarcely make it easier, nor of devils harder. The constant companionship of the best men would not, I believe, make purity of heart or unselfishness more easy; good society, using of course the term in the farthest possible from its common acceptation, is doubtless very pleasant, but no more essential than other pleasant things which in this unpleasant world we must do without, or seek in the past, or in books; but depend upon it, that Heaven has willed that we should live, no less than die, alone."

"And do not you think that this very theory of isolation from others, living for yourself and dying for yourself, has in itself something selfish in it?"

"No," said Stanton, "not if fairly stated and rightly named; neither of which things have you done. Independence is very different from isola-

tion, and living alone is a very different thing from living to oneself; — trouble you to state me more correctly, Master Ned."

Oakfield smiled. "And yet," he said, kicking a log of wood farther into the fire with his heel, "I think the distinction is more of words than anything else."

"I beg your pardon, Sir. I, not being a Bachelor of Arts, do not deal in verbal distinctions; seriously, Oakfield, there is all the difference in the world, if you think of it. Isolated we cannot be if we would; the world drags us on, knitted so cunningly one to another, that we cannot be altogether dissevered if we would; it is impossible but that our words and acts should have some fruit, either for good or evil; nothing dies but it springs up again, somewhen and somewhere; we influence we know not whom, nor how; but we do influence others, and they us; we are not isolated, but independent we must be; to be warped unconsciously by the magnetic influence of all around, is the destiny, to a certain extent, of even the greatest souls; but to have the conscious life over which we do exercise control, affected by other men, that is the sin of dependence, which to you, you say, is a grievous temptation; though I know, you good fellow, how bravely you resist it; to me, by no merit of

mine, but by happy accident, I think less so than to most people."

"Of course," said Oakfield, "I agree with you that we must be independent — that we do not live at all if we only follow a multitude—whether it be to do good or to do evil, it is all one. We only differ then as to the difficulty of this independence."

"Even so: but, Oakfield, to show you that it was more than a verbal distinction which I drew just now"—

"Don't be malicious, I give in."

"No, but listen: do you remember our correspondence when you were at Hajeepoor, and your dwelling on the duty, or, as you said, the necessity, of separating yourself altogether from society?"

"Yes, perfectly; and I think still that when society is below a certain degree of badness, entire separation is the only course open."

"Well now, I think that is just to confound, practically, independence and isolation: the latter is what you attempt (you cannot succeed) in separating yourself and hermitising; and that is to live not *alone*, but for yourself; which, as you remarked, sounds—let me add *is*, selfish."

"What do you call living alone then, as distinguished from living to oneself?"

"Why I think the distinction is very great, and the apparent resemblance consists merely in using the word 'live,' to express two very different things. A man who hermitises *lives* to himself; that is, actually lives, eats, drinks, sleeps, thinks, walks about in his own sweet company; very good company for a season, but which, resorted to exclusively, day after day, becomes very infectious; a man catches the disease of self from this continued intimacy with himself. When I used the expression 'live alone,' quoting from Keble, I meant to live really; the inward, spiritual, true life. This life *cannot* have communion with fools, though the body which contains it may mix in their company, and though the courtesies and kindnesses of life may go on at the surface; underneath lies this life, which is not folly, but man's soul, than which it is not more impossible that God himself should mingle with folly. So long then as the majority of one's acquaintance are fools, one must, as far as they are concerned, *live* alone; not a pleasant, but a sorrowful necessity, from which, the more the soul can escape the happier. It escapes whenever it detects a soul with which to commune, that is in friendship; great men escape more than others, because it is their privilege to be able to detect the spark of eternal Soul, still latent, under the dull mountain

of folly, even in fools, while we can see no further than the mountains; and so it is truly said their vision, and thence their sympathies, are extended."

"True," said Oakfield, fervently; "I admit your distinction; and will you not add, Stanton, that to the Christian man there is always a wonderful escape open; that he, of all men, is ever privileged to have communion with the greatest man's soul that ever was, or is, or can be?"

"True," replied Stanton, "solitude was one of the griefs from which he redeemed us; we are not alone, because he is with us, even as he was not alone, because the Father was with him. Come," he said, after a short pause, during which they both sat silent, looking at the fire, as is the manner of musing men, "let us apply part of what we have been saying, and come over to mess,—the first bugle sounded ages ago."

They joined arms and walked over to the mess hard by.

"I have made two new acquaintances since I saw you last, Oakfield; I might almost say friendships, were they of longer standing; one man you will meet to-night; Wykham, of the 12th cavalry; a very pleasant fellow; reminds me sometimes of Vernon. I must have a long talk with you about that dear boy, Oakfield."

"You shall; poor dear Arthur! I shall be

curious to see this man,—of what standing is he?"

"About seven years —looks very young though; but the other,—by the bye I forgot; he said he knew you well; that he came up the river with you."

"Not Mr. Middleton?" exclaimed Oakfield.

"The very man, Sir."

"Where is he now — not here?"

"No; but where you will very soon be able to see him — at Ferozepore."

With these words, they reached the mess-house. Wykham was dining with Stanton, who introduced him to his friend. Wykham was a cavalry officer, as Stanton had informed Oakfield, of some seven years' standing. He appeared young; indeed, having come out at seventeen, he was only twenty-four, and looked less; he was a very short small-made man, with long black hair, not large but very bright eyes, a fairly-shaped, moderately-sized, but in no ways striking nose; his mouth was by far the most expressive feature, small, sharply, firmly, gracefully cut, though rather disguised by a dark well-defined moustache. The only thing that could ever have made Stanton compare him to Vernon was his fresh transparent complexion, so beautiful a feature everywhere, but especially amongst the pasty, muddy, liver-stained visages of Anglo-Indians. His expression was cheerful and

sunshiny to a degree, contrasting, we do not say favourably but pleasurably, with the tanned, quaint, old bachelor look of Stanton, and the anxious, rather melancholy expression of Oakfield. He had a clear, ringing, almost boyish, voice, and a laugh which alone would have made him popular at a mess table. One more trait, not of person, but of mind, perhaps, had reminded Stanton of Vernon, — his almost childish affection for home. He was as unlike Oakfield and Stanton as possible; had none of the earnest spiritual interests of the one, nor the quaint semi-epicurean philosophy of the other; and yet perhaps more wit — would have been vulgarly called more clever — than either of them. Yet he was a man that it was almost impossible, if well known, not to love. He was a specimen of the natural or honourable man (if we may use the expression) in its best development. He had been brought up on worldly, but "strictly honourable principles;" his father was a soldier of the old school, who in many ways deserved "the grand old name of gentleman;" these "honourable principles" had been engrafted on a congenial stock, and bore good fruit after their kind; what marvel if they were mistaken for, or at any rate received as, a sufficient substitute for a better kind; what marvel that young Wykham, with his ardent generous

nature and "strictly honourable principles,"—having come in contact with so many without either natural nobleness or conventional honour,—having seen the infinite superiority of gentlemen to blackguards, should have come to the conclusion that after all "gentlemanliness," in his sense of the word, and "honour" were the most excellent way, should have been content to take this as his religion and idea of life? Let us be assured that many men of twenty-three have a worse religion and a lower idea—few a better and a higher. And yet there is great hope that a noble nature shall some day have got all the good that is to be had out of gentlemanliness, and seek a deeper vein; when the merry heart which now laughs out of those happy eyes shall be overclouded, surely that man of honour will kindly and easily develope himself into a man of wisdom and of love.

Such was the Lieut. Wykham to whom Oakfield was introduced, and to whom, before dinner was over, he already felt strongly attracted. Not that they were attracted, as that foolish saying goes, by the great dissimilarity of their characters; dissimilarity never attracts; "Like will to like:" not by the dissimilarity, but by the real fundamental harmony which united them both, and which existing, the superficial difference might perhaps give an additional piquancy. They were indeed engaged

in the study of the same harmony, though in different parts; Wykham playing lightly and happily over those upper notes which lay clearly, palpably, and harmoniously open before him: poor Oakfield struggling, not without perplexity, with those deeper chords that ring, not with a more correct, yet with a deeper and diviner tone. Wykham was undoubtedly the better and readier performer; but on how much simpler an instrument!

They soon plunged *in medias res* about home, public schools (Wykham had been at Eton), India, and so forth. Wykham abused this last with an energy that amused Oakfield, in language that would have been too vehement had it not been qualified by his good-humoured voice and laughing eye. Stanton sat and listened with a serious judicial air. Wykham ran off a rhetorical string in which the words "fools," "drunkards," stood out somewhat harshly. Oakfield, warming to his work, chimed in with "uneducated," "frivolous," "worldly-minded."

"My dear boys," said Stanton, when they had both done, "you won't make the world you live in a bit better by abusing it."

"Oh, don't listen to that cold-blooded epicurean old scoundrel; he'd tell you that this country was one of the best in the world, and swears that Blackey is an amiable angel, who never told a lie in

his life; and that officers never misbehave, and civilians never bully the natives; and he hopes to live here all his life, and never go back to that wretched, wicked, uncomfortable England."

"Unluckily, youngster," said Stanton, laughing, "Oakfield knows how much I like this country; I only say it's no use complaining and yelling about it; if you don't like it, get out of it; and if you havn't the pluck to do that, hold your tongue and make the best of it."

"Did you ever hear such an old bear?" said Wykham, turning to Oakfield.

"Some truth in it, I fear though," said the other, looking half ashamed of his share in the duet.

"I don't admit" said Wykham, —

"No, no, old fellow," interrupted Stanton, "of course you don't, we never thought you would. When do you leave this?"

Wykham laughed, shook his head at Oakfield, as though he would say, "Observe his coolness in treating me like a child," but only answered, "Not till the 15th of April."

"You've got your leave, though?"

"Oh yes,— 15th of April to 15th of October; hills north of Deyrah, on private affairs."

"Oh, you are going to Mussoorie; why not Simla?"

"I've been there twice, and want to see the

other place. Do you think of going to the hills this hot weather?" turning to Oakfield.

"No, I never thought of it; why, you see, it's only my second hot weather in the country."

"Ah, that's the way," said Wykham; "men never think of the hills till they've once been there, and then they never think of anything else; there's Stanton never been to the hills in his life, I believe,—just the kind of regular old pipeclay Indian who would like to sit grilling down in the plains every year of his life."

"Wrong again, Wykham; I was in the hills long before you came out, you griff; come away, Oakfield,—that fellow always makes one abusive; come and have a cup of tea at my quarters."

So they went and spent one of those pleasant evenings, over a good fire, which now and then, in the cold weather, remind the poor exile of the winter evenings he has left at home. Wykham kept most of the talking to himself; was never deep, but always amusing; sometimes witty, sometimes childish.

"He's a very good fellow," said Stanton, when he had taken his departure.

"So he seems, indeed," assented Oakfield, with great heartiness.

The three weeks' sojourn at Meerut,—what with the artillery hounds and cricket in the day-

time, pleasant parties and comfortable after-dinner sittings, in the evening—passed pleasantly, only too quickly. The cold weather was drawing to a close. It was the middle of March; the fire in the evening was on the wane, was occasionally suffered to go out unperceived; some careful married men began to decline coming down to cricket in the middle of the day, "because of the sun;" it was, however, the best part of the year for dák travelling. Oakfield and Stanton tiffed together the afternoon on which the former was to start; Wykham too, who had been a great deal with them during Oakfield's visit, was there. At about four o'clock they parted, not without hopes of meeting again ere long, now that all three were in the North West.

Oakfield got into his palki, and commenced his journey at a melancholy jĭg-jog pace, with that doleful grunt of the bearers which so painfully characterises this Indian mode of locomotion. And yet a fine cool evening, in a palki, is not altogether unpleasant; so, at least, our traveller thought, as he jogged along, with the shutters open, comfortably observing, in his recumbent posture, how a beautiful sky can atone for the dulness of the dullest landscape; how all sense of weariness, at the waste of treeless, waterless sand, was lost in admiration of the setting sun; the calm cool night stealing over the cloudless sky; the stars imperceptibly

becoming visible; for so it is that a beautiful night makes even a desert beautiful. A palki, too, is a good place for thinking; no life stirring, except the bearers, who, in their swarthy nakedness, stalk along by the side, gabbling in an unknown, unknowable dialect; the traveller, as he journeys along in the darkness, feels that influence of solitude which always tends to thoughtfulness.

Oakfield thought of the friend he had just left,—of Wykham, whose frank, kindly, youthful gaiety had made a great impression upon him,—of his own Hajeepoor life,—of Vernon, and thence, by a natural transition, of his home friends. Occasionally he would throw a forward glance at his new regiment, and speculate what it would be like,—what he was to do,—what scope there could possibly be for a man in regimental life, believing assuredly that there must be some. He thought of those Moravian soldiers who, after Wesley's preaching had given the last genuine impulse to Protestantism, had, for boldly rebuking vice, protesting against ordinary worldliness, suffered persecution. "This is the nineteenth century, it is true," he would say to himself, "and according to the old soporific adage 'Things are changed, and society is so different, and who am I that I should rebuke others?' and so on. All true in its way, but too comfortable,—too soothing a truth

to make it necessary to insist much upon it; the opposite equally essential truth of never compromising goodness for expediency's sake,—meaning by expediency selfish personal ease; this is more to the purpose to remember in these days. We are safe enough from becoming enthusiasts, God knows. A perplexed question! and yet, I believe, a single-eyed love of good—a determined resolution neither to do, nor in any way to countenance evil, will carry one through. There is a field of duty everywhere; I know that;—and if God is ever to be known in India by Missionary preaching, the Missionaries must be, not a score or so of isolated clergymen, but the soldiers and civilians!"

So thinking he fell asleep, and journeyed on comfortably enough, waking only at the stages, when the relieved bearers opened the shutter, thrust in their torch and black heads, and most unceremoniously demanded *buxees.**

We need not follow him through the monotonous stages of his dák journey. Suffice it to say he travelled day and night, and reached Ferozepore on the 1st of April, being the fifth morning after he had left Meerut; and found that his regiment was not expected for some days. On

* "*Buxees*," that is gratuity; one of the plagues of the East. No man is content to receive the wage of his work, but expects an additional *buxees*, or gratuity.

the 6th they were to march in. It was not without anxiety that Oakfield rode out to see them.

He kept aloof and observed; the result of his observations was satisfactory, the first appearances were highly favourable; the regular march, the well sloped arms, the locked up ranks, the equidistant sections, and the general appearance of both officers and men, no less than the precision with which they went through the simple business of dismissal when they reached the ground, spoke well for the discipline of the regiment. They were preceded, too, by a good band—also symptomatic. In fact the 90th Light Infantry were a crack corps. Nor let it be denied that this is a great praise. It implies good discipline; good discipline for the most part implies a capacity for good fighting; and fighting is what a regiment is meant for. Then "crackness" implies also a certain standard of honour, of which the 81st (for instance) were quite innocent, and of which again it may be said that it is infinitely better than nothing. And yet, unfortunately, this honour standard, to say nothing of its intrinsic value, generally had an Indian tinge in it. These 90th were "all honourable men"—but they were also all in debt. Crackness is not to be had for nothing, And perhaps the motive which led to this unfortunate indebted state of things was (however much the parties

concerned called it *esprit de corps*, sacrificing themselves individually to the good of the regiment, and so on,) but a vulgar one;—a wish, namely, to imitate another service; to try to do with fifteen officers what Queen's regiments do, not without debt, with thirty. The same affectation showed itself in other ways: regardless of climate, red jackets in all seasons were compulsory at mess, and decanters only might appear upon the mess table; they even went so far as to ignore the native languages in imitation of the universal ignorance prevalent in the royal army; considered it *infra dig* to understand that "damned black lingo;" which ignorance, assumed in the first instance with the seniors, degenerated in a few years into a very genuine one in the case of the juniors, so that the unfortunate interpreter, when he found himself pestered by fifty notes in a morning from subalterns, asking the Hindustani for "boil this egg hard,"—"the curry's too hot," &c. &c., had reason to curse the day when this absurd fashion was first adopted.

Of course the corps was detested by other native infantry regiments (whom they in return looked down upon), and what was worse, heartily laughed at by the service which they aped; but to this, as is the wont of servility, they were blind. Such was the Indian flaw in their honour standard

— which, as has been said, is a poor one at best. A word terribly dragged through the mud that same unfortunate "honour." What honour really is, we need not define; what it is supposed to be by crack regiments and the like is more our concern.

It behoved the 90th regiment, according to their own idea of honour, to fight well—and to be smart in manœuvring, in the dressing and setting up of the regiment. So far so good. A clear gain this, showing how much better an honour standard is than none. It was in their creed also that the officers should dress well on ordinary occasions. This again was not so well, seeing that it involved larger tailor's bills than Ensigns on 195 rupees a month could at all manage to pay. The same objection may apply to many other articles of faith, with regard to the number and style of horses, furniture, &c., which become a member of a crack regiment. A good outside, in short, was what honour prescribed in the first place.

Next came the moral duties, which began with "Thou shalt not fear," an excellent commandment, comprising, indeed, almost all others, if interpreted "Thou shalt not fear man nor devil," but considerably less excellent if understood "Thou shalt not fear God, nor man, nor devil." In this last sense, indeed, a merely brutal and hideous commandment. Honour finds, after its fashion, a mediocre

interpretation between these two, and says, "Thou shalt fear God, so far as to go to church on a Sunday now and then, and to be horrified, and express thy horror loudly should a clergyman ever be guilty of one, even the least, of those excesses which thou thyself dost not scruple to commit daily. Thou mayest fear the devil or not, as seemeth thee good, or even compromise the matter by speaking of him in a manner partly fearful, partly reverent (no knowing, as some one said, where thou mayest want a friend one of these days), partly facetious; but thou shalt not fear man; that is, thou shalt not fear his sword, nor his pistol, nor his fist; but *him*,—his blame, his scorn, his reproach, his coldness, thou shalt be afraid of with an exceeding fear." This is the first and great commandment; the second is "Thou shalt pay attention to women, not as some do vainly talk, that thou shouldest regard women with great awe and reverence as the weaker vessel, and the purer and the holier; but thou shalt hand chairs to them with zeal, and study to grimace and wag thy foolish tongue, that they, being taught of thy folly, shall at length think well of thee, and so gratify thy vanity; in short, thou shalt be a lady's man." Third commandment, "Thou shalt create a sensation by spending much money; whether or not thou hast it to spend, is but a tame poor-spirited question;" and so on through

a whole decalogue and more, the long and short of which may be thus summed up: —

"Thou man, with an immortal soul, member also of this crack regiment, shalt not seek wisdom in the Heaven above nor in the earth below, shalt move daily amid the wonders of the universe in thy course from finity to infinity unwondering: — shalt wonder at nothing; shalt rather be wrapped in contemplation of thine own beauty, in earnestly studying to appear beautiful by such adornments as thy tailor, thy horse-dealer, thy bootmaker can furnish thee withal; in labouring by infinite noise to raise as much dust as may be around thee; that instead of thy wondering at God's works, and thyself, also his work, thy neighbours and acquaintances may be induced to wonder, poor fool! at thee."

Such was the section of society, such was the code with which Oakfield's destiny now brought him into contact.

CHAP. XII.

"By no disturbance of my soul
Or strong compunction in me wrought
I supplicate for thy control
But in the quietness of thought.
Me this unchartered freedom tires,
I feel the weight of chance desires;
My hopes no more must change their name
I long for a repose that ever is the same."

WORDSWORTH.

OAKFIELD was not long in finding out Mr. Middleton. He found him living not alone, but with his sister, a young girl of about nineteen, who had just come out from England.

And now doubtless the reader supposes that we have at last come to the heroine, and that Oakfield is forthwith to fall in love. Alas! we fear not. Much as he admired Miss Middleton, —much as he soon got to like her,—intimate as he became by his constant visits to the house,—it is quite certain that after a year's residence at Ferozepore, the greater part of which had been passed in the Middletons' society, he was not at all in love. It was hard to say why not; far

too hard for the Ferozepore gossips, which term includes the whole community, who looked on the engagement as a settled thing. All the parties concerned, indeed, when questioned by the few intimate acquaintances who considered themselves privileged to ask,—denied it; but of course this went for nothing. Meanwhile neither Mr. Middleton nor his sister were weak enough to shrink from what was becoming every day a more and more agreeable friendship, in deference to cantonment small talk, of the existence of which they were aware, but, living very much out of society, were very indifferent to. Miss Middleton was, as has been said, a girl of nineteen, fresh from England; no one could have refused to call her pretty: her well-shaped head, her expressive brown eyes, her small, finely-cut, slightly aquiline nose, her sharp, well-shaped mouth, with her beautiful, though rather pale complexion, established her claim beyond dispute to beauty of feature. And he must have been dull who had quarrelled with the expression of intelligence and refinement that shone so manifestly in her whole countenance. And yet some complained that she looked too clever. Young ladies five and six years her senior, felt half afraid of her; sometimes, indeed, her features did wear, not a stern, but a severe expression, that looked strangely in nineteen. She was uni-

versally declared to be *blue;* crack officers of the 90th who danced with her at station balls, and found, they knew not why, their crack ball-room common-place break down under them in the presence of simplicity, ignorant of the cause, painfully conscious of the effect, avenged themselves by reiterating this "blue" charge loudly. And yet *blueness* seldom leaves its victims such free grace in action and conversation. She was a problem, as indeed a sensible, unaffected, well-educated, graceful woman always will be to stupid, affected, ignorant, coarse people. To Oakfield naturally not a problem, and yet the Ferozepore mess were right, when, after things had gone on in the same way for about a year, they began to think that "after all, Oakfield was not spooney upon Fanny Middleton." Some of the young subalterns, indeed, thought their own prospects "in that quarter" were beginning to brighten, that small talk would assert its supremacy after all. What then (that the reader may not be as much puzzled as the 90th mess), what was actually the footing on which Oakfield stood with his friends? Intimate friendship simply; in which there is really nothing wonderful, if simply stated and simply believed; wonderful only to the mental eye, overlayed with gossip through which these things can be only gossipingly discerned. Oakfield was,

indeed, struck with Miss Middleton from the first, and conceived it possible that he might fall in love; did not think it necessary to shrink with horror from the possibility, rather hoped, indeed, that it might be so; he continued his visits, talked with her and her brother, and found the society of both delightful; but really very much in the same way; he did not get to regard her with any feeling essentially different from what he did her brother. Perhaps there *was* something cold in her quick intelligence; perhaps without at all admitting that *blue* charge, the intellectual element did a little predominate over the sentiment in her; there was perhaps a want of that helplessness, that all-womanly dependence, which might have moved Oakfield's deepest affections. However this might have been, fall in love he certainly did not, and she knew it, and so did her brother, and a tacit common understanding existed between them that it was so.

Meanwhile this acquaintance kept Oakfield rather aloof from the regiment. Not only that he passed so much of his time with the Middletons,— riding, dining, very often spending the day with them, but also because there was one unfortunate peculiarity in the conversation of this crack regiment that made him shun the mess table. There was no open brutality, — and for this let "crackness"

have its due;—he did not weary of *shop*, though it doubtless did sometimes become wearisome; he could bear tenderly with the infinite affectation of Lieutenant Jackson, and the radiant self-satisfaction of Ensign Wemyss; the bastard sporting slang of Captain Whittles was a grievance he could endure; nor would he have murmured at the flash man-about-town-talk of the dark complexioned Wiggins, who had been seventeen years in India, but none the less delighted to talk familiarly of the club and the season, as though he were an habitué of the London pavé. But the sin which he could not forgive was the familiar disrespectful way in which he constantly heard ladies' names bandied about, according to the 90th honour standard of interpretation of the second commandment of gentlemanliness recorded above. There was a poor girl in the regiment – that is to say daughter of its commandant—whose one only known sin before God or man was her ugliness. Most ugly she undoubtedly was; as undoubtedly shy, modest, retiring, amiable; a good daughter, and bearing her affliction with ever patient cheerfulness. Even the consciousness that his mess was a gentlemanly one, and its members the most "gentlemanly set of men in the service," could not reconcile Oakfield to the coarse unfeeling way in which the changes were being perpetually rung

upon the bare subject of this poor girl's ugliness. There might have been a flirting young lady in the station rejoicing in the name of Sarah Waters, and Oakfield neither the wiser nor the worse; but to one who valued woman's society as the purest influence of life, who regarded a woman's very name as sacred, it *was* painful to see and hear, every night, Ensign Brooks, as he came into the mess room, and patting Lieut. Straddles on the back, exclaimed, "Well, old fellow, seen Sally to-night?" And then to hear of the puppyish things which Straddles averred proudly he had said to Sally, and the infinitely unfeminine answers which he declared Sally had made to him! But a horrible thought suggested itself to Oakfield that this style of free conversation, by no means confined to Miss Sarah Waters, might extend itself in his absence (not in his presence, for character wins a certain involuntary half-liking respect from crackness itself) to his own friends. He thought, in short, of the name of Miss Middleton being thus degraded, and although, as has been repeated, he was not in love, the thought filled him with horror; so, with the exception of his intercourse with the Middletons, he began to fall back very much into his solitary Hajeepoor course of life,—a course which again had the natural effect of making him disliked.

He was sorry for this, but did not think it at all a serious calamity. Living very much alone, he found himself naturally led into Stanton's reading habits, and determined to commence reading on a systematic plan. His actual military duties, slight as they were, he discharged with a conscientious and *con amore* diligence and energy that won him the reputation of being a smart officer; indeed there was something almost ludicrous in the tenacity with which he clung to the ray of work which his profession afforded. As to the native languages, he had great disputes with Mr. Middleton as to the necessity and duty of giving up much time to them; he so far obliged his friend, and perhaps satisfied his own conscience, as to work for and pass the Hindustani examination, but could not make up his mind to go on for the great go.* He was dining at the Middletons' the day he had passed in Hindustani, the 15th of November—just that season of the year when fires again begin to be lighted, and all are cheered, not only by the present enjoyment of the delightful November weather, but also by the thought of having a whole cold season before them. After dinner, Mr. Middleton, his sister, and Oakfield, drew round the fire. "And what do you intend

* Meaning the higher examination, not in Hindustani alone, but also Persian and Hindee.

to do, now that you have passed the P. H.,* Oakfield?" the former began.

Oakfield had been expecting some such question, and drew himself up as though preparing to do battle. "Burn the Bytal Pachisi†; to begin with," he answered, laughing.

"Well, I shan't quarrel with you for that, if you buy the Prem Sagur in its stead. Seriously, I hope you will go on for the P."

"Upon my word, Miss Middleton! I appeal to you, whether this is fair of your brother. He talked me before into submission to a theory not my own, in deference to which I devoted three months to the most lamentable drudgery, and now the very day that the result of my weakness is made manifest, he begins a new attack."

"Well, but you know, Mr. Oakfield, I always agreed with him in the former discussions, and what was true then is true now."

"I ask you, Oakfield," said Mr. Middleton, "don't you feel very glad to have passed the P. H.?"

* *P. H.* are the letters affixed in the army list to the names of those officers who have passed the examination in Hindustani; thus a man speaks of having passed his P. H. — *P.* again, denotes having passed all the examinations required — Hindustanee, Persian, and Hindee.

† *Bytal Pachisi* and *Prem Sagur*, the two text books in Hindee, the former for the P. H., the latter for the P. examination.

"Of course I do; because one is always glad to have an examination over, and besides, to have acquired some knowledge of a language, even Hindustani, can never be a matter of regret."

"And does not the same apply to Persian? — Should you regret having learnt that?"

"Of course not; though I fancy it is rather a magnificent way of speaking, to talk of a man who passes the interpreter's examination as having learnt Persian; but at any rate, I would much rather have learnt German at the end of the next six months."

"In England, I grant you, German would be a better language to learn than Persian, but not in India."

"Why not?"

"Simply because the studies of true interest in every country are to be drawn from the people amongst whom you live; and to profit by these, you must know the language of the people *well*;— this in the first place: in the second, because the P. examination is the highest test prescribed by government for Staff employ."

"My dear Mr. Middleton, I think really that first reason is more like one which a person in England would assign, than a man of thirteen years' Indian experience. That *your* principal interests may lie in that direction is very likely, but

what does, what can a subaltern in a native infantry regiment see or know of the people? Beyond our official connection with the sepoys, and our domestic relation with our servants, we see really nothing of the people, have nothing to do with them, no influence, nor any opportunity of gaining influence with them."

"I dare say," said Miss Middleton, "that that is quite true; intercourse with the natives is just one of those vague sweeping expressions which people in England are so fond of with regard to India."

"Just so," said Oakfield, "and which, however well meant, are really nothing more than what all vague sweeping expressions, founded upon ignorance, are, — cant."

"My dear Sir, above all things, clear your mind of cant," Miss Middleton quoted, laughingly.

"Yes," responded Oakfield, seriously, "that above all things: true, oh Dr. Johnson!"

"Well," said Mr. Middleton, "between you, my unhappy 'in the first place,' has been pretty well pulled to pieces; you calling it cant, and you, Miss Fanny, helping out his impertinence with a quotation. But you gain no real advantage after all; you only push me a step further back. My second proposition, that the main interests of life must be derived from the people and circum-

stances that surround you, is still true; at least you have not denied it, but only its applicability to the case of a native infantry subaltern. Then I can only answer, that it becomes your true interest to try and change that case, and get into a situation where it is applicable."

"Henry gets out of his scrape with great cleverness, I think," observed Miss Middleton.

"You mean, in plain English," said Oakfield, "that I should try to get an appointment?"

"Well—yes,—at least not an appointment merely, but such an appointment as will bring you intellectually and morally in contact with the people amongst whom it is your lot physically to live."

"In plain English, again, try to get into Civil employ."

"At last we come to it,—yes."

"I have not the least inclination for it."

"Perhaps not; but what then?"

"Why should I solicit what I do not wish for, merely because it is what other people choose to think a good thing?"

"Have you no wish to rise to distinction?"

"I hardly know what you will think of me for the confession, but honestly—no."

"Oh, Mr. Oakfield! what a want of ambition," Miss Middleton exclaimed, almost impatiently,

and her sparkling eye proclaimed at once where lay one of the points of disunion between her and Oakfield.

"I wish I could feel sure it was want of ambition," he said with rather a sad smile, "for that last infirmity of noble minds has always seemed to me but a contemptible sort of infirmity after all;—but I fear indolence may have as much or more to do with it as wise contentment."

"And suspecting that to be the case," said Mr. Middleton, "do you consider yourself justified in shrinking from work?"

"Is there no other work besides this one line which you point out?"

"I certainly doubt whether there is. Consider yourself—can you name any other?"

"Do you remember, Mr. Middleton, our conversation coming up the river, about a year ago, when you propounded two problems for my edification?"

"Perfectly — what then?"

"Why," answered Oakfield, "the first might be called a statement of the object,—of that native line of work which you are recommending;—but the second, though you call it less important, has often suggested itself to me as more so; and the second would seem to point to a line of duty very different from Civil employ;—a line for

which I think I feel myself more fitted, I am sure more inclined."

"What was the second problem?"

"The reason of the great and generally acknowledged degradation of European society in this country."

"I do not think I ever can have called that question even comparatively unimportant; I may have said it was easier of solution."

"Well, at any rate you now own it to be important;—does not this question point to what I may call an European phase of labour?"

"My dear Oakfield, I might retort your own complaint upon you—all this is vague. It is very well to talk of reforming society in this country, but beyond that reform which every good and able man works by the force of his own character, how are you to work? where are you to begin?"

"By putting oneself first in opposition to some cherished lie, by exposing the falseness which lies wrapped in some common-place respectable formula?"

"Well, but," interrupted Mr. Middleton, "how are you to do this?—This is only saying still in general terms what is to be done?—I still ask how do you propose to do it?"

"That is a question not answered in a mo-

ment: opportunities, I should think, would not fail to present themselves — and then" —

"And then you may seize them; but what till then? How fill your time till they do occur? It may well happen that an honest man, if on the look out, may find opportunities of effectively asserting some truth in opposition to some fashion of society, but this will not make a life's work."

"Well, then," said Oakfield, evidently rather pressed, "I will work for myself. Why should not I as well as another devote myself to study? My profession leaves me ample leisure; why should I not, instead of seeking to change this leisurely for an engrossed, fully-occupied life, rather embrace the former? Why not live in contemplation till God chooses to call me to action? Why seek action? Is not contemplation, too, work? Is it not work to seek for wisdom, to learn to read nature, to learn to live? I see no necessity for my striving to become a collector, or a magistrate, but every necessity for my working. I have a right more or less to choose my work beyond that which my actual calling in life demands from me. I may choose, with fear and self-distrust indeed, but still without shame or doubt that it is an allowable choice, that work which is open to all God's creatures, which is silent, whose end is hidden, whose rewards are secret, in preference

to that which the world calls work as though there were no other, the work which it is indeed most essential should be done by some, but which it is not essential for all to do; whose praise is loud, because its results are evident and its rewards manifest; — the work of carrying on the world's business."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Middleton, half musingly, "you are so far right that we are too apt, all of us, to consider that essential in which we are engaged ourselves."

"And to forget," added Oakfield, "that which is essential to all of us. You won't think for a moment," he continued, "that I am talking in presumptuous disparagement of that noble toil which you and many others so bravely combine with your own active personal spiritual life; I merely contend for the freedom of choice; and maintain that a life of thought, and study, and contemplation may be as *bonâ fide* a life of profitable work as cutcherry-going and magistracy; provided of course that it be not pursued at the expense of that service which we owe to our worldly calling if we have any."

"I believe there is much truth in what you say, Oakfield,—and yet, in connection with what we first began talking about, I cannot but think that you would feel more free to select your own line

in life, when you had done all that was required to qualify yourself for those other duties which most men consider the most important."

"A terrible waste of time," urged Oakfield.

"I doubt whether any time that is spent upon an irksome unwelcome labour for conscience sake is *wasted*," replied Mr. Middleton; and he lifted his eyes from the fire where they had been fixed and looked at Oakfield, who seemed to have no answer to make.

"Fairly beaten!" exclaimed Miss Middleton, as she rose and led the way into the drawing-room. "What a pity it is," she said to her brother when Oakfield had gone,—"that he should not have more ambition; he might rise to great things in this country."

"Depend upon it, Fan, that there are few men in Ferozepore more ambitious than Oakfield;—Yes," he continued, observing her incredulous look, "I believe that man to be most singularly and genuinely ambitious to serve God;—and that, Fan, is a rare ambition, not the last infirmity, but the noblest craving of noble minds."

Meanwhile, Oakfield meditated upon the foregoing conversation, and the result of his meditations may be seen in the following note, which he addressed to Mr. Middleton the next morning:—

"My dear Middleton,

"I have been thinking over what we were saying last night. As we pique ourselves on our 'practical tendencies' in conversation, you will be glad to hear that I am going to set to work this morning at the Gulistan.* The force of meekness can no further go.

"Yours affectionately,

"E. O."

So he recommenced his dreary studies, to which he devoted a steady six hours a day through the whole cold weather, managing, however, to get some cricket notwithstanding. He had been in the University Eleven at Oxford, and therefore was of course a very great gun in that line at Ferozepore. There was one other occupation too which he never allowed any pressure of Persian, or Hindee, or cricket, or anything else, to supersede; and that was his correspondence. His home letters he still felt, as he had said to poor Arthur Vernon when he first came out, to be the greatest pleasure of his life; with his mother and Margaret, the intimacy, the deep communion which had begun in the later years of his home life, was still continually becoming closer; to Herbert, too, he was bound by those close ties which connect the only two brothers of a family, and now the overland

* *Gulistan*, the Persian text book for the "P." examination.

letters were beginning to acquire new interest from small scraps written in large round hand, in which Rose or Mary would say, "My dear Eddie, I hope you are quite well—I wish you would come home—I am quite well—Tabby is quite well —she had kittens last week. I am your affectionate Sister, &c. &c." He had two Indian correspondents, Stanton and Wykham, with both of whom he was in constant communication, and it would have been hard to say whose letters of the two were valued most; for though he had known Stanton so much longer, there was about the other a beaming cheerfulness—an honest, unselfish, sunny heartiness, which made a letter from him as welcome as a shower of rain in the hot weather. Stanton's quaint, quiet, half cynical, half epicurean style never varied.

So Oakfield's days passed very quietly, and by no means unpleasantly, "I feel, you know," he said one day to Mr. Middleton, as they walked up and down the cricket field, where a match was going on wherein Oakfield was engaged as a player, and Mr. Middleton as a spectator, "I feel that this Persian business, which does to pass the time, only postpones, and does not at all answer the question of what I am to do in life; it puts it further off, but it must come and be answered sooner or later; reading Gulistan is still prepara-

tion as much as Winchester was; — the entrance into real life remains future."

"What! you begin to acknowledge then, that real life implies actual engagement in the world's work."

"Not so," said Oakfield, hastily, "by no means necessarily; I consider Stanton as engaged in real life, and yet he has nothing but his books, his papers, his meditations, and last, but not least, what constitutes indeed the great point, his own life, to frame according to the laws which he draws from those books and thoughts; — Hallo! there's Perkins run out,—I never saw a man run so badly, —that's the reason I would'nt go in with him,—I must go in now though, so prepare to be astonished."

And he really might have astonished a spectator who knew more about the game than Mr. Middleton; the astonishing way in which he drove Hargrave forward for four's; the leg hits which he made, sending the ball three times into the tent; the cautious science with which, when Hargrave retired in disgust, and Hopkins's more dangerous bowling succeeded, he contented himself with scoring singles, might have won admiration from the very cricket correspondent of "Bell's Life."

The cold weather passed on, and again the days began to grow hotter and hotter, and first fires disappeared, and then cloth trousers fol-

lowed, and people went home earlier and earlier in the morning, and came out later and later in the evening, and doors and windows were closed, and then came punkahs by day, and next punkahs by night, and then tatties, and then therm-antidotes,* till at last May came round again, and found the unhappy Anglo-Indian world once more surrounded with all the necessary, but uncomfortable sweltering panoply of the hot weather. May was enlivened however, to Oakfield, by a visit from Stanton, who came over on a month's leave between musters, a great proof of friendship, to endure a ten nights' journey for a twenty days' sojourn. Wykham would have come perhaps, had he been at Meerut, but he had managed "to do the head-quarters people again," and had, by unflagging energy, by continual persecution of the unhappy brigadier, and still more unhappy commanding officer, succeeded in getting leave to spend a second hot-weather running in the hills, and was gone to Simla. Stanton's visit, short as it was, was a real blessing, not to Oakfield only, but to the station generally, for as he of course became a companion in the frequent visits to the Middletons, the poor gossip, which had languished in the case of Oakfield, was enabled to revive in a

* *Tatties* and *thermantidotes*, — devices well known to Anglo-Indians for moderating the heat of a house in the hot season.

new direction. It was really creditable to the undaunted perseverance of gossip that it should have ventured to fix itself on Stanton of all people in the world, for if ever there was a Sphinx's riddle, it was to ascertain from his unmoved face and manner what he really thought about any person or thing whatsoever. The two were dining together at the Middletons' the night before that fixed for Stanton's departure. Very different was the look of things from when last we introduced the reader to that dining room. The white-washed fire place, the open doors, the hot dusty air blown about by the drowsy punkah, the white raiment and whitening faces contrasted painfully with the scene presented on that cheerful November evening. The first important feature, however, remained unchanged, or changed only for the better by the addition of Stanton; the pleased, cheerful, friendly look and tone of the small group, whose regard for each other the burning dust storms were happily unable to affect.

"Don't you think, Stanton," asked Mr. Middleton, "that I did a very good thing in persuading Oakfield to read for the P.?"

"Oh, yes, undoubtedly; I admire you for it, and him still more; it's more than I could ever have done myself, I acknowledge, but then I always was lazy, or, at any rate, too fond of work-

ing in my own way. However, that proves nothing; it's clearly a good thing to get done. What do you intend to do after July, Oakfield?"

"If I pass"—

"Pass, oh, of course, you'll pass; fancy a B. A. being plucked!"

"Ignominious, certainly," said Oakfield, laughing, "but I fear not impossible."

"You should go into the committee room in cap and gown, and bachelor's hood, to impress them."

"A rabbit-skin over a red jacket would have an impressive appearance certainly, judging from my recollection of those dear old men whom they will go on giving degrees to at Oxford; I never saw any sight so resembling one's idea of a cow in a china shop, as those poor old fellows with a Doctor of Laws' gown hanging uncomfortably over the epaulettes of a field officer's uniform."

"Well, I don't agree with you at all, Mr. Oakfield," Miss Middleton said, "I remember when I was at Oxford commemoration two years ago, some old officer received a degree, and I thought the combination of war and peace was striking."

"Ah! but it is more than war and peace, Miss Middleton; it is war and letters; war and the ingenuous arts; and the Phœnix who combines those two attributes is often found, I believe, in

continental armies, but I fear seldom in ours; so it is not a real union, but a sham one."

"I will not admit it to be a sham," she replied with animation; "it is not implied that the poor old general who is selected for honours is a literary man, but only that literature delights to acknowledge the services she has received from war."

"True," said Stanton, "don't answer, Oakfield, for you have made a failure; you may make anything absurd by putting it in a false light;—you have answered him unanswerably, Miss Middleton, and been a better champion for Alma Mater than her unworthy son."

So the evening passed off pleasantly. Conversation ran on easily and gracefully; and though they did not touch upon subjects of any deep interest, yet the consciousness that these interests existed was sufficient to give a warm and kindly tone to the current of lighter discourse that flowed easily over them. A deeper chord could not fail to be struck, however, as Stanton and Oakfield sat together in the verandah after their return home. There had been a dust storm all day which had made the night air somewhat more bearable; and though the sky was still filled with the dingy particles, through which the stars were scarcely visible, yet there was the never-failing beauty of night; the beauty of silence and dark-

ness. They were to part the next day, and though they were neither of them men given to much expression of feelings, who both hated anything like maundering, yet there is, especially in India, something very solemn in parting with a friend. These two men watched with common interest the stream of life as it bore them both along. Again for each of them, it was to flow on alone; what pains, what struggles, what conquests, what defeats, must be experienced by each in his solitary course!

"Do you ever feel your conscience reproach you, Stanton," Oakfield asked, "when you observe Middleton's busy useful life?"

"That is just a question I have asked myself; and, on the whole, no. So far as he does his work more energetically than I do mine, I feel ashamed, but not because my work is of a different kind from his."

"What should you call your work, if you were asked in terms?"

"Study and contemplation, — improving and using my intellect as the servant of my soul, and learning to go through the world with my eyes not shut but open."

"It must be hard to keep yourself up to this work?"

"Very; — so hard that, for this reason only, I

would advise a man to try and get for himself some work which he shall be under compulsion to do; the compulsion itself does half his work for him."

"But, Stanton, besides this difficulty, do you never feel desirous that others should share in your belief? In your study to see, is it no pain to you that others should remain blind? While trying yourself to look into the realities of things, to see all the world around you mocking over the appearances and shadows of them? Do you never feel inclined to protest for your neighbours' sake and for the truth's sake against the idols which the world worships; the falsehoods which it acknowledges and promulgates, the — Look there —!" he added abruptly, interrupting himself and pointing to the mess house, about an hundred yards distant, whence the glare of the billiard lights, the sound of voices and loud laughter offered a harsh contrast to the sacred stillness of night; "are not those sights and sounds a concrete made up of innumerable falsehoods, daily and hourly repeated?"

"Yes, it is so; but, Oakfield, they have Moses and the prophets and must hear them; a voice from the dead would not persuade them, how much less the feeble call of a companion struggling and sorely bestead himself? Now and then comes a poet, a prophet, a priest, who does protest, as you call it, against the state of complacent unreality in

which the world sleeps on, and some hear, but the many will refuse to hear, and no earthly power can alter it. It is a true word, however harsh it may sound; we must look out for ourselves. we must even live by our light, and be content to let the world live by theirs."

"And yet it seems there is something required of us more than letting them live by their light; we must appear to live by it also ourselves."

"Well then, we come to our old ground, and you know my opinion; that to a certain extent we must even do as you say, unless we consecrate our life and take it with us out of the world, and live altogether apart; but ordinary men in ordinary circumstances must, so far as I see, accommodate themselves to the light of their neighbours, taking care the while that their own is not dimmed. I see no help for it; extraordinary circumstances have ere now occurred and called forth witnesses; as an extraordinary man tramples down ordinary circumstances and speaks as a poet or a prophet; so extraordinary circumstances may draw forth ordinary men into the position of witnesses, that is of martyrs: those of us who can, may become the first of our own motion; only we must count the cost and weigh ourselves, and ascertain if we are, indeed, strong enough for the task; I need not say that you and I have no such estimation of

ourselves; but all of us must ever hold ourselves ready at God's bidding to become the last. I fear I do not make myself clear."

"I understand you," said Oakfield, "have you ever felt so bidden?"

"In a very small way we are all of us often called upon to become martyrs. Every time we refuse to laugh at vice, or assent to an unpopular opinion, so often we are, in a very low degree, witnesses, martyrs to the truth; but I never have been put in a position where the testimony has been attended by grave penalties, an exemption I am thankful for, and yet I know more painful martyrdom may be my lot, or yours, or any honest man's, at any time; keep we ready for that time, for depend upon it, Oakfield, it is more trying than you and I may be disposed to think; so good night."

The next day Stanton departed, little knowing how soon Oakfield's experience was to verify this their last conversation.

CHAP. XIII.

"On, let no longer
Low trickling malice blacken your good meaning
With abhorred venomous glosses. Stand you up
Shielded, and helmed, and weaponed with the truth,
And drive before you into uttermost shame
These slanderous liars! Few firm friends have we."

"But how can it be known that you're in earnest,
If the act follow not upon the word?"

COLERIDGE.

We have observed that Oakfield was not very popular in his regiment. He was conscious of the fact, and did all that he thought he had a right to do to remove the disagreeable impression by courtesy, by taking such opportunities as he could find (scanty it must be owned) to oblige his brother officers, and by mixing with the regiment more than he had hitherto done. He still, however, found himself offended by that infirmity which has been alluded to; he once ventured to remonstrate in private with Straddles (about the worst offender in this respect), but Straddles, who had often felt aggrieved at the rebuke which Oakfield's silence implied to some of his free and easy

criticisms on the ladies of the station, did not take the remonstrance at all kindly, said, rather sulkily, "that he had been in the service a good deal the longest of the two, and thought he knew how to behave to a lady as well as another; that at any rate it was no business of Oakfield's, and it was very absurd of him to affect a prudishness in that which nobody else saw any harm in."

Oakfield increased the *suaviter in modo*, but said "that he thought others did see harm in it; that it was a regimental practice he allowed, but one which had been remarked upon, he knew, by other men out of the regiment, with disapprobation."

This was meant well, but it was an unfortunate remark. Straddles immediately adopted the high-flown *esprit de corps* line, thought it "very odd for an officer to allow strangers to speak ill of his regiment, and not only so, but to adopt their slanders; that for his part, he was content with the approbation of his brother officers, without travelling out of the regiment; that he didn't think a man so much the better for being a civilian," &c., &c., and so Oakfield found that in his desire to conciliate, he had done more harm than good, and Straddles went off in high dudgeon to tell his brother officers of Oakfield's having taken it upon him to set up as censor of manners to the

90th, and as the *suaviter in modo* completely disappeared in the second-hand recital, poor Oakfield was generally anathematised as a meddlesome, ignorant, presumptuous puppy. A griff to come and dictate to a crack corps on manners! Their morals might be capable perhaps of reformation, but if they had a strong point it was their manners. So far so good; and Oakfield might have relapsed into his original secluded way of life; just regretting that his attempt to mend matters had failed so signally, while the regiment might have subsided into their former state of disliking indifference, had it not been for the arrival of a new and important actor on the scene, whose coming was the signal for the revival of irritation. Oakfield had often heard Lieutenant Stafford spoken of and referred to as a great authority in the regiment, and was rather curious when he heard, one morning in the middle of June, that this great personage had reported his arrival on return from furlough. He was introduced to him that night at mess; they both met with an awkward consciousness; Oakfield had not been disposed to admire what he had heard of Stafford, who, on his part, had been hearing in the course of the day all the complaints in the regiment about Oakfield's presumptuous isolation from his brother officers, or still more presumptuous interference with them; neither was there

anything prepossessing in the sullen quarrelsome expression of Stafford's dark features. He was, indeed, one of those men who are a disgrace to the society that tolerates them. It is not to be supposed but that a crack corps, like the 90th, should have had very strict notions on what are called, *par excellence*, the laws of honour; and although, of late years, the change in public opinion had compelled them to modify somewhat of their practice in this respect, the theory was more rigid than ever. Stafford was the great authority and example on this important subject. He had been out three or four times, had been once wounded, and, it was rumoured, had once killed his man, though to this point there was attached a mystery which the juniors of the regiment had never penetrated.

The bad reputation which these "affairs" won for him had their natural effect upon his irascible sullen temper, and he became the pest and bully of his regiment. That his brother officers in great measure endured his insolence will not be wondered at by those who know how long and unaccountably the reign of a bully lasts amongst boys and men alike, how magical the spell of his power appears, till some one suddenly comes forward, braves, and breaks it.

Returning from England, Stafford felt himself

called upon to brush up his reputation. His first business was to look out for a safe man, and Oakfield seemed to offer himself, in many ways, for his selection. It was obvious that, much as he was disliked, Oakfield had nevertheless a kind of weight and influence in the corps, not entirely unlike his own,—"alike, but oh, how different!" There was a seriousness in Oakfield's expression, and a firmness about the mouth that might not promise well, but the eye of the bully rested more upon the soft, courteous, conciliating manner, perhaps, too, the almost girlish delicacy of complexion, as characteristics not often found in the fire-eater. In a few days, it was generally understood in the corps that Stafford had expressed his intention of taking this Mr. Oakfield in hand, "and bringing him to his bearings," and Straddles, Brooks, and Co. were like school-boys on the look-out for mischief. Oakfield knew something of Stafford's character, observed his rather discourteous manner to himself, and resolved to be particularly careful neither to give nor to take offence. There are certain limits which even a bully cannot go beyond, and within these, Stafford found it impossible to effect his object; for things which might undoubtedly have been interpreted as insults, fell back powerless from the appalling suavity of Oakfield's appa-

rently imperturbable temper. So he determined to change his ground, and finally adopted Straddles's mischievous advice, "to try him on with the Middleton touch." Straddles told, with all the glee of a mischief-maker, how Oakfield had protested with him (Straddles) about what he was pleased to call "talking freely of ladies," how sensitive he appeared if anybody ever attempted to *chaff* him about his intimacy with the Middletons, and much more of the same sort, which determined Stafford as to his line of conduct. He immediately called on the Middletons, and took care to be seen two or three nights riding by their carriage on the course, and being thus prepared, resolved on the next Saturday night (that being the evening when there was generally the largest party at mess) to open his fire. The next Saturday night happened to be the 20th of June — Oakfield's birthday, on which day, his mother, Margaret, Herby, Rose, and Mary again had their picnic at Lodore, in honour of this Edward, whose battle with society was just about to begin. It was on this Saturday evening then, in one of the pauses that occur at all large dinner parties, that Straddles asked, in a loud voice, "Were you on the course to night, Stafford?"

"I? Oh, yes! I was riding with Fanny; didn't you see me?"

"Who is Fanny?" asked Brooks, with maliciously assumed ignorance.

"Fanny Middleton, of course; and a deuced nice little girl she is, and very fond of me, upon my soul."

His words, and the laugh that accompanied them, were agony to Oakfield, who, however, sat silent, not feeling justified, so far, in interposing. He knew that he was being observed by all, and made a great effort to master his temper. Stafford observing his uneasiness, and mistaking the cause of it, went on the more freely. The style of his remarks may be imagined, it would be painful to record them, when suddenly he was interrupted by Oakfield, who, with a flushed face, but in a calm, and still courteous tone, said, "Mr. Stafford!" Stafford turned abruptly upon him, and a dead silence ensued, "You can hardly be aware, but I now inform you, that I have the honour to be on terms of intimate friendship, both with Mr. Middleton and his sister."

"Well, Sir?"

"I should have thought it unnecessary to add that it is extremely unpleasant to me to hear the name of the latter used with freedom, not to say disrespect, at a public mess table."

A flush of triumph, passion, and excitement, suffused Stafford's dark, lowering countenance, as

he exclaimed in his loudest, coarsest tone, his passion carrying him away as he went on:—

"And who the devil do you suppose cares whom you are intimate with, or what is unpleasant to you? and who gave you authority to dictate to me or any other officer about respect or disrespect? I suppose you imagine, Mr. Oakfield, that because your impertinence was once tolerated you may presume again. You've mistaken your man, Sir; I never allow impertinence, especially from one who, for all I know, may be a hypocrite and a coward."

After uttering these words with intense vehemence he flung himself back in his chair, cast a glance at Straddles, as if for applause, and waited the result. The whole party were completely silent, waiting for what should follow. Oakfield's face was the deepest crimson, and his frame shook with emotion that could have been hardly mistaken for fear; for a few seconds he kept his eye upon Stafford, and from the nervous motion of his lip it might be seen what passion had to be overcome before he could turn round and say clearly, though not certainly in so calm a tone as heretofore —

"Captain Colt, you are the senior officer present, I appeal to you whether an officer is thus to be unprovokedly insulted at the mess table?"

Nothing could have fallen in better with Staf-

ford's wishes; he knew Colt to be a poor weak nonentity, whom the least expression of regimental feeling would be sufficient to overcome; he perceived too that his old bad influence was beginning to work again.

"Oh no, Mr. Oakfield, that's not the way we do things in this regiment; we're not at school now; you can't get off by going and telling; if you wish to set up to correct our manners for us, you must be ready to take the consequence of your damned impudence."

This time Oakfield was prepared, and it was with almost his usual composure that he said again, "Captain Colt, you hear this and allow it! In that case," he added, as the wretched Captain affected not to hear, and cast an imploring glance at Stafford, "I have but one alternative," and he rose and left the table. The conversation that had been entirely suspended during the scene, now broke forth violently. Colt, who was half afraid of the consequences of his own cowardice, affected to look upon the thing as a matter of no importance, and mumbled out something about "foolish boys." Brooks and Straddles were loud in their admiration of Stafford.

"He's got it at last; I thought Stafford would soon bring him to his level."

Stafford himself sat in full enjoyment of the contemptible adulation.

"I suppose I shall have to give him a fight," he said magnificently.

"Are you sure he'll want it?" sneered Straddles; this seemed to be the general impression.

"Oh, confound it," lisped Whistles, "he *must* fight, you know."

"I bet you ten to one he doesn't," said Straddles, "I know how he'll get off."

"How, how?" shouted several voices.

"How? eh! why come the religious dodge."

A roar of laughter followed the suggestion.

"Well, I don't know," said Perkins, whose cricket sympathies led him to have more liking for Oakfield than any of the rest, "It's my opinion there's very little white feather about Oakfield; I thought he was going to shy a bottle at your head at first, Stafford."

"Oh, did you?" said the hero, to whom this speech was very unwelcome.

"Yes, I did upon my honour, and he was devilish near doing it too; and by Jove, I don't think he'd have been far wrong if he had."

This might have led to scene number two, had not the majority, who wished to have scene number one well out, interfered.

"If that's your opinion, Perkins, you'd better offer yourself to be Oakfield's friend, for upon my soul he's got very few friends here." And another

laugh rewarded Straddles's facetious glance round the table.

"Thank you for the hint, Straddles," said Perkins; "more to the purpose than anything you've said for a fortnight. Good evening to you, gentlemen," and he rose and hastened out to Oakfield's quarters. He found Oakfield in his own verandah, walking up and down with faster steps than people usually take in the hot weather, evidently engaged in exciting meditation. He did not see Perkins, who, on his part, though bent upon what he honestly believed to be a work of charity, felt embarrassed as to how he should begin.

"Well, Oakfield!" he said in a friendly voice.

Oakfield started.

"What, Perkins! is that you? Come in." And he led the way into the house, lighted a candle, and ordered tea. He divined the motive of Perkins's visit, and though he would rather have been left alone that night to think matters over and brace himself for the struggle which he knew must come, yet he felt that he could not and would not go out of his way to avoid coming to the point. They both sat silent for some time. At last Perkins blurted out, "Awkward business this, Oakfield. The fact is," he added, after a pause, during which Oakfield made no reply, getting up and walking up and down the room as a relief to the difficulty he

felt in speaking his mind, "the fact is, I thought Stafford behaved very badly to you to-night, and as you have not—excuse me, but you know it yourself—*many* friends in the regiment, why I came over to offer you my services; there, the murder's out."

"It would be absurd to affect not to understand you, Perkins; in the first place, let me thank you heartily for what I well know is most kindly meant, but I am afraid we differ essentially as to the line of conduct I ought to adopt."

Perkins opened his eyes, looked doubtfully at Oakfield, but said nothing.

"You meant to offer your services to take a message from me to Stafford?"

"Of course."

"But, as I do not intend to send any message, I shall have no occasion to trouble you."

"You don't mean to send a message?" gasped Perkins.

"No."

"You won't fight him?"

"Distinctly not."

"Oh my God!" said poor Perkins, in real distress. It was not strange in Perkins; he had been brought up with the idea; he could not account for a man's, much more an officer's, refusing to resent a gross insult in the usual man-

ner, but by supposing him to be a coward; and to do the good man justice, this supposition was really painful to him. "They said he'd come the religious dodge," he exclaimed, in a mournful soliloquising tone.

Oakfield could not forbear laughing at this speech, and the way in which it was said, though sufficiently far from being in a laughing mood. "It's no good our discussing the matter, I fear," he said, "for we should never agree. You suppose I am afraid to go out with Stafford."

"Why," said the other, "you say you certainly won't fight him,—didn't you say so?"

"Yes, undoubtedly; nor will I; but as you have been so good natured, Perkins, and meant, I know, so very kindly, in coming over here, I will tell you what I should not condescend to tell any one else in the regiment, that I am not in the least afraid."

Perkins was half taken aback by the cool decided way in which Oakfield said this, as though his assertion must at once remove all doubt on the subject. "I fear you won't get people to believe that, you know; they'll say, if he's not afraid why doesn't he fight? What *can* you say to that?"

"I shall say nothing to the 'people' you speak of; I tell *you* that I am not afraid; don't you think it must be a sufficiently painful thing to be obliged

to say so?" and his burning cheek pointed forcibly this last question. "Perkins," he resumed abruptly, "do you think I should tell a lie?"

"No," said the other promptly.

"If a lot of people accused me of stealing and I denied it and said, 'I am not a thief,' should not you, from what you know of me, be inclined to believe me?"

"Yes, of course; thief! absurd!"

"Well, why doubt me now when I tell you as distinctly that I am not a coward? Heavens! is it not pain greater than fifty duel fightings for a *man* to have to repeat three times, in as many minutes, that he is not base, that he is not a craven?"

"But, my dear Oakfield," said Perkins, half touched, half bewildered, "just think of the world, what they'll say: upon my honour I half believe you; I said in the mess room that I knew you did not funk. But then," he added, with a woefully puzzled look, "why don't you challenge him?"

"Because I think it would be foolish, dishonourable, and wicked, to do so."

"As to the wicked, I don't know anything about that, and I don't see that it has much to do with it, but what you mean by calling the satisfaction of a gentleman dishonourable, I profess I don't un-

derstand. My goodness! have you no idea what the world will say?"

"Yes, a very distinct idea."

"Well! and you're not afraid?"

"No," interrupted Oakfield, "I have told you I am not afraid. Come," he added, "it is no good our talking about it; I should have to talk till next week to explain fully to you my reasons, and meanwhile we shall only disagree painfully; I thank you again for your kindness in coming here; I have shown my gratitude by making a sacrifice, and saying that which pride and self-respect would both induce me to leave unsaid. I shall be sorry if you, or any honest man, have a bad opinion of me; but for the rest, I tell you I I can bear it. Good night."

They shook hands, and Perkins walked home very mournfully. "I can't make it out," he said to himself, "I cannot comprehend it; he can*not* be a funk. What on earth am I to say to that blackguard Stafford to-morrow? I've a great mind to fight him myself."

His sorrow passed off in a deep sigh, as this last relieving thought flashed across him, and he tumbled into bed. There was laughing and exulting in the 90th regiment the next morning. Straddles and Brooks went over very early in the morning to Perkins's quarters.

"Well, old fellow," exclaimed Brooks, "who was right? does he show fight?"

"I have nothing to say about the matter," answered poor Perkins, sulkily.

"What, didn't you go to his quarters last night?"

"Yes."

"Well, he did not send a message?"

"I told you he didn't."

"He won't fight then?"

"Go and ask him yourself," said Perkins, impatiently, unwilling to disclose the whole truth; "only I advise you not to try him too far, for by Jove though he has queer notions, which I don't profess to comprehend, yet I believe still that there is no white feather about him."

So saying, Perkins flung himself out of the house, leaving his two brother officers to make the most of what he had told them. They were in a state of great excitement; it seemed evident that Oakfield did not intend to be the challenger, but to complete his overthrow it was necessary that he should refuse Stafford's challenge. They instantly rode off to their hero's bungalow, and, waking him, told him what they had gathered from Perkins's reluctant testimony; and Straddles at last, to his infinite joy, succeeded in getting authority to go to Oakfield and demand satisfaction on the part of

Stafford for having ventured to interfere and censure that gentleman at the mess table. In the fulness of his glee at being invested with the important character of "second," Straddles quite overlooked the monstrosity of the message he was charged with, and as it was still not more than five o'clock, and, as he said, with great magnificence, "the less time lost about these affairs the better," he mounted his horse, and, in company with the devoted Brooks, rode off to Oakfield's bungalow. They found him out; the bearer informed them that the Sahib was out; gone, he believed, to the Judge Sahib's,* that is to Mr. Middleton's.

"Was the Sahib riding?"

"No, the Sahib had his horse with him, but was walking."

So Straddles, to whose impatient mind the idea of a whole day's delay was intolerable, determined to ride towards the Civil lines in the hope of overtaking him. They soon saw Oakfield, walking, with his grey Arab, a very handsome horse given him by Mr. Middleton some time before, led behind him. Oakfield was, as may be supposed, going down to take counsel with his friends; not indeed so much to take counsel (for his mind was

* Natives generally speak of an European officer by his office rather than his title; thus a magistrate is generally called "Judge Sahib."

made up) as to get the sympathy, which he knew he should find, and which, with a pardonable weakness, he longed for; for that soft complexion and gentle voice told a true tale of a gentle sympathising heart to which these stormy contests were charged with keenest suffering. He would, indeed, considering what was the origin of the whole affair, have been glad that Mr. Middleton should remain in entire ignorance, but this he knew was impossible, and so he thought "he may as well know the exact truth from me at once." He had enough to occupy his thoughts as he walked along. The storm of contempt and ignominy which he knew awaited him in his regiment he was comparatively indifferent to; he felt more bitterly conscious of the cowardly sneers of those false fools, who, while professing to think him "a very good young man, quite right not to fight a duel," and so on, would at the same time shrug their shoulders, and say, with a self-complacent smile, that "they were glad their tempers had not been so severely tried; they really feared their hot blood might have been tempted to resent such insolence," and so on; of those hypocrites, who, not daring to deny the principle on which he acted, would yet in their hearts despise him, and with their lying lips utter insinuations against him for practising what they cantingly preached; he thought, too, of the possi-

bility of his temper being yet farther tried; of men thinking they might take advantage of his refusal to fight; and it was while his thoughts were thus engaged that Brooks and Straddles came up with him, their syces* running after them. Straddles dismounted, but still Oakfield took no notice of him. He was indeed intensely excited, and walked on, determined not to be the first mover in whatever might ensue. Fool as Straddles was, he could detect something in Oakfield's manner, in the compressed lips, the flushed face, the sparkling eye, the firm tread, that suggested that his errand might not be a very pleasant one after all. But Brooks was looking on, and it was too late to retreat. Stepping up to Oakfield, therefore, he took off his hat according to what he conceived, from Lever and other authorities, to be the approved fashion of opening proceedings, and said, though not in so commanding a tone of voice as he could have wished, "Mr. Oakfield!"

Oakfield came to a dead halt, and turned round with an abrupt energy that was rather startling. But the Rubicon was passed, and he must go on.

"I am the bearer of a message, of what nature you may imagine, from Mr. Stafford."

"I understand you, Sir, I can receive no such

* *Syce* — Anglicè, groom.

message from Mr. Stafford, I wish you good morning."

Encouraged by this answer, Straddles plucked up again; planting himself in front of Oakfield as the latter was about to resume his walk, he said in his usual flighty tone, "Oh, I must have a more distinct answer than that, you know."

"Be silent, Sir," said Oakfield, sternly, "and stand out of my way."

"Oh, it's no good talking big, you know," said Straddles, who thought he had it all his own way now, "one isn't easily frightened by a man who lets himself be called an impudent coward, and then goes down to his friend, the civilian, to swear the peace."

Unhappy Straddles! the cup of Oakfield's indignation was full, and human nature could endure no more. He seized Straddles by the collar, who resisted, but Oakfield was at any time the more powerful man, and now, in the outflowing of his pent-up wrath, he could have held ten Straddles's. Grasping his collar in his left hand with the force of a vice, with his right he raised the heavy riding-whip he carried, and thrashed the poor fool till he roared for mercy. The whole transaction took less time in the performance than it does in the reading; flinging him from him with a force that ultimately deposited him recumbent on

the other side of the road, half stunned, altogether bewildered, he just said to the gaping Brooks, who sat on his horse, all eyes, and arms, and legs, "Better look to your friend, Sir," mounted his horse, and rode on to the Middletons'. He found Mr. Middleton and his sister drinking tea in the verandah, according to their custom; he joined them, and tried to take his usual share in the conversation, as though nothing extraordinary had occurred; but it would not do; he was still a very young man, and had not acquired that power, which only long practice can give, of entirely suppressing all trace of emotion. Mr. Middleton had observed, when he first got off his horse, his flushed appearance, and such other vestiges of his recent excitement as had not yet disappeared; and now his short answers, sometimes his listless inattention, so different from his usual manner, confirmed his impression that there was something the matter.

"Are you ill?" he asked at length, with some anxiety.

Oakfield started, and felt annoyed that his looks should have betrayed him.

"No," he replied, "thank you, quite well; but—in short, I want to speak to you for a minute," and he rose as though about to retire; then recollecting himself, turned to Miss Middleton, and said,

"I really beg your pardon, I don't know what you will think of my thus coolly intimating that"—

"That I am *de trop*," said Miss Middleton, laughing at his embarrassment, though obviously not in the least offended. "Oh! never mind; you want advice, of course; I always know when people come for advice; I am used to it, because you know everybody comes to be advised by Henry; not that they often take his advice either, I believe; the worse for them." So saying, she went into the house, not without some curiosity, of course, nor, in spite of her gay manner, without anxiety.

"Well, Oakfield, my dear fellow," said Mr. Middleton, kindly laying his hand on the other's arm, "What is it? I knew there was something wrong directly I saw you."

"Why the matter is this—I have been grossly insulted, then called out by the man who insulted me, refused to meet him, and flogged the person who brought the message and added to it gratuitous impertinence of his own—there, you have the matter in a category."

"When did all this happen?" asked Mr. Middleton, suppressing any show of surprise.

"The insult last night; the challenging and flogging half an hour ago."

"Ha! no wonder you appeared excited: and now will you tell me the particulars?"

"I came for that purpose, little thinking what additional matter the course of my ride would furnish me with." And he began by premising to Mr. Middleton why he told him what it would be better he should not have known at all; explained the dislike with which he knew he had been, for some time, regarded in the corps; and lastly related the scene of the preceding night, and the Straddles episode of that morning. Mr. Middleton listened with deep attention, but gave no sign of sympathy or disapprobation.

"Excuse my appearing cold," he said to Oakfield, observing that the other looked rather disappointed at his silence; "I must, if you kindly take me into your confidence at all, hear the matter judicially before I can take up either side,—with or against you. Will you on this understanding endure a cross-examination?"

"Certainly."

"Well then, are you quite sure that you addressed Captain Colt in such a manner as to make yourself heard by him?"

"Perfectly sure that he heard me on both occasions when I spoke to him; there was a dead silence at the table, and everybody looked to him for his answer. Indeed, the second time there can be no doubt, for Stafford, who, by his answer, must have heard it, was a good deal further from me than Colt."

"Are you certain that when you at first remonstrated with Stafford you used no more irritating expressions than what you have related to me?"

"I am certain that I have rather over than under-coloured what I said."

"When you left the mess, did you intend to take any steps with reference to what had passed?"

"I intended to take none."

"Well, but Oakfield," continued Mr. Middleton, relaxing his cross-examination tone, "don't you know that the articles of war expect an officer to resent any affront offered to him, for the honour of the service?"

"I really can't help what the articles of war expect in this case; resenting a personal affront is a matter for my own personal consideration;—if I feel myself none the worse for what that man said to me; if I am conscious that I was restrained by no other than a right feeling from not giving vent to my temper at the time; if I know that to resent it now by calling the man out"—

"The military authorities do not demand that," interrupted Mr. Middleton, "only that you resent an affront."

"How resent it?"

"I suppose by reporting it to the higher powers, that it may be made the ground of judicial investigation."

"I did all that officiality has a right to demand of me," said Oakfield, getting up and walking up and down the verandah, "when I twice appealed to that man Colt;—if he likes to take it up officially he can; I shall not."

"Will you let the world then say that you were insulted and took no notice of it?"

Oakfield stopped, and looked enquiringly at Mr. Middleton, whose face was, however, unreadable.

"You are trying me," he said; "you need not fear; I have often considered this matter of resenting affronts, and am persuaded, that for any authority to dictate to me, in a matter of close personal concernment,—in a matter too of moral conduct,—is a gross tyranny not to be submitted to for an instant."

"But how about Straddles? What shall you say if he demands satisfaction?"

"I shall say nothing; no more than I would to a thief who tried to rob me, and demanded satisfaction because I knocked him down. I should give the thief into custody, and probably send in charges against Straddles."

"Suppose, and bear with me, for it shall be my last question, suppose Stafford, seeing that you take no notice of what he has said, and have refused his challenge, should insult you again, gra-

tuitously and more grossly; what should you do then? excuse me, I see this is painful to you; it must be; but believe me, it is well you should see all your difficulties fairly."

"You are right, and this which you suppose, I have myself thought of: I think, in the first place, it is a very unlikely case. Society might and would condemn me, but neither would it suffer him to go on breaking through all bounds of decency; but still (you see I will not shirk the difficulty), suppose he did; I am inclined to lay down no rule for myself; but acting honestly and upon conviction throughout, trust, in the event of such a thing as you suppose taking place, to the impulse of the moment to carry me right. Because, recollect, I have this great advantage over him, that I, from the first, repudiate all society's laws and maxims upon the subject; am utterly free from, while he is still restrained by them."

"So if I were to advise you," said Mr. Middleton, half smiling, "to go home, report Stafford's conduct to your commanding officer, and write an apology to Straddles,—Well, well," seeing that Oakfield was going to interrupt him, "don't be afraid, I'm not going to advise you to do so: come inside, however, it's getting too hot here."

They went into the breakfast room, and immediately the servants began to prepare the house

and all the anti-hot-wind panoply for the day. The tatties darkened the room, the doors were shut, and all was made tight to weather the heat till sunset. Oakfield, half lay down on a couch under the punkah: Mr. Middleton in his turn commenced a quarter-deck walk up and down the room with the air of a man who wants to make a speech, but has difficulties in beginning.

"You mustn't think," he at last began, in a very different tone from that he had previously used, "that I am insensible to what you must have suffered, and must still suffer, nor that I do not heartily admire the way in which you have taken the first opportunity of carrying out the principle of disobedience to the lying code of society's laws of honour, which we have often, ere now, agreed upon. As to the origin of the whole matter, this is of course for both of us a subject of most painful delicacy; and I can well understand that nothing hurts you more in this transaction than having been the most innocent cause of mixing up her name with a fracas of any kind. But I owe it to you to say distinctly that you said and did no more than, as a gentleman and a friend, you were bound in honour to say and do."

"Then," said Oakfield, evidently much relieved, "you have removed the only small shadow that at all haunted me of doubt and anxiety; and

I am now perfectly indifferent as to what becomes of it all."

Mr. Middleton nodded by way of answer to this, and went on, "I have often heard of this man Stafford; he is so infamous that I doubt whether even the laws of honour would insist upon your fighting with him; but this is a minor point: to refuse to fight a duel is, in these days, nothing; it is hardly any martyrdom at all; to refuse, however, to take any notice of an insult, brings you at once to an issue with society. I need not tell you that all my sympathies will be on your side of the battle. Then comes the affair of this fellow, Straddles; and here, — besides that human temper must not be tried too far, — besides one's natural satisfaction at seeing impertinence and bullying punished, I will not deny that I consider it a most fortunate circumstance on other grounds. It just gives the necessary balance to the point which you will have most to insist upon; while you declare, as you must declare, for you cannot take lower ground, that your fear of God makes it impossible for you to fear man, it will be well (not at all necessary, I acknowledge, for the satisfaction of your own conscience, the only really essential point, but still it will be pleasant and gratifying to human weakness) to remind scoffers that it does not follow, that, because we choose to obey God's

and nature's code of honour, that we should in all cases abstain from the weapons of the flesh,—a true expression, though it may sound like one of Habakkuk Mucklewrath's: that there are occasions when we knock a man down with as clear a conscience as a soldier draws his sword in battle: —so far as to my agreement with you; not of much consequence anybody's agreement to an honest brave man who has made up his mind; but such as it is you have it fully. I catechised you partly for your own sake, that you might perceive distinctly your position and its consequences: that last question was really rather a puzzler to myself; but I am satisfied your answer is the right one, and that you should go right on with a clear conscience, trusting to that to lead you through difficulties as they present themselves. You know I do not often use strong expressions, let them have additional weight if I use them now: I may have appeared cold to you at first, let me convince you that I feel warmly; let me assure you, dear Oakfield, that my sincere affection and friendship for you would have outweighed any difference of opinion as to what course you should have pursued in this affair; as it is, strengthened by the most entire agreement and admiration, they are more than ever yours." They shook hands with hearty cordiality, and for some time remained silent.

Presently, Mr. Middleton resumed, "However, we must prepare for battle. I suppose there is sure to be an inquiry into this business?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, then; it is clearly to our advantage that the facts should be accurately known in the end; so just tell me over again, word for word, what happened, that I may write it down." This was done accordingly, the paper was signed and dated by Mr. Middleton, and put carefully aside.

"Well, I must be off," said Oakfield, rising as soon as this business was completed.

"Why not spend the day here? it is far too hot for you now to go back; why it must be nearly seven o'clock."

"I must go though, notwithstanding; it wouldn't do to appear to wish to keep out of the way."

"Perhaps not," assented Mr. Middleton.

"And besides," — and Oakfield hesitated.

"You mean with regard to ———," said Mr. Middleton, quickly.

Oakfield nodded,

"Oh, don't have another thought about that; I insist upon it, Oakfield, that you do not allow this business to make any difference in your coming to us. I shall take care that she hears nothing of the origin of the dispute."

So Oakfield agreed to return to dinner in the

evening, and then galloped off towards cantonments. His careful bearer had long ago put up the tatties and darkened the house, so that upon first entering his room, out of the glare of the sunlight, he did not perceive that there was already somebody there, and started at hearing the voice of Lieut. Taylor, the Adjutant of the regiment, close by him.

"Mr. Oakfield!"

Oakfield begged his pardon for not having spoken to him, and so on.

"I heard from your servants that you would be back to breakfast, so I took the liberty of waiting. I am sent, as you may imagine, by Col. Pringle; and when I tell you that Mr. Stafford and Mr. Brooks have been at his bungalow this morning, and that Mr. Straddles is reported sick, you will hardly be surprised at my telling you that I am come for your sword." Lieut. Taylor departed with Oakfield's sword, and the latter being thus symbolically put under arrest, sat down to meditate over his solitary breakfast.

CHAP. XIV.

"O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

DANIEL iii. 16—18.

WHEN Oakfield left Straddles lying in the road, he did not think it necessary to trouble himself as to how that gentleman was to find his way back to cantonments. Brooks did not exactly know what to say. It may be allowed that there probably is some awkwardness in opening a conversation with a man who has been horsewhipped. Straddles on his part did not seem inclined to say anything; he mounted his horse with some difficulty and rode home. On reaching the bungalow, he found himself suffering so severely from his well-merited castigation, that he allowed Brooks to send for the doctor. The doctor was a fussy little man who loved gossip as he did his life; he was not likely, having once got hold of such a matter, to let it

sleep for want of stirring. He rubbed his hands, talked about his duty, and immediately went to report this "very extraordinary occurrence" to Col. Pringle. Col. Pringle was, as he himself would proudly say, a gentleman of the old school. He was, in short, a crack man, put to command this crack regiment; and when he heard of a man being called a coward, and then refusing to fight, he said, with great decision, that the young fellow was a disgrace to the service, and he should do his best to get him out of the 90th regiment at any rate. So he sent the Adjutant to put Oakfield under arrest, as a preliminary step to reporting the business to the Brigadier for inquiry. In the course of the day, Straddles sent Brooks with a hostile message to Oakfield, who, having already enough on his hands, cut the matter short by saying, that if the whole regiment challenged him he should refuse to go out; and furthermore, that if anybody else came to him with a challenge he should send in charges against both the bearer and the sender of the message. As duelling, whatever may be thought of it, is still a military offence, which a military tribunal *must* punish if brought before it by a vigorous prosecutor, Straddles and Co. were fain to content themselves with this answer, solacing themselves the while with anathemas against Oakfield both loud and deep. And

yet it was strange that while "funk"—"bully"—"coward," were the words in everybody's mouth, yet the real impression was the same with Perkins's: few or none could persuade themselves that Oakfield was really a coward: they were, in fact, like honest Perkins—puzzled; just as society always is, and must be, most ludicrously puzzled, when it catches a tartar in the shape of a man who thinks for himself, and drives a coach and six through its paste-board regulations;—puzzled and powerless; for the more it thunders its anathema, the more provokingly the traitor smiles and says, "I deny your jurisdiction."

Oakfield being, by his arrest, confined to the station, and unable to go to Mr. Middleton, Mr. Middleton often came to him. The Court of Inquiry met, and was dissolved; and on the 15th of July, the very day that Oakfield passed the Interpreter's examination, being obliged to attend the Committee as an attainted man, without his sword, he received information that he was about to be tried by Court Martial on charges which would be afterwards furnished to him. Stafford was to be tried also (so even-handed is military justice) for having sent a challenge.

"Well," he said to Mr. Middleton, who was with him when he received this intelligence in a demi-official note from the Adjutant, "it's a

good thing to have got this Hindee Examination over before entering upon this new battle."

"You mean to give battle then?"

"Clearly; — how absurd a dilemma social morality finds itself placed in, being thus obliged, in deference to the law which it outwardly acknowledges, to try Stafford for merely obeying the law which he and it really believe; for disobeying which latter, and treating it as a contemptible idol, they are to proceed afterwards to try me."

Oakfield of course found himself living almost in complete seclusion. Perkins came to see him occasionally, but they differed so irreconcilably on the question which was naturally uppermost in the thoughts of both, that these visits, though kindly meant and kindly taken, were rather an infliction to both parties. There were one or two officers in other regiments who ventured to take Oakfield's part against the cry of the mob, and who, as a point of honour, to show that they did not join in the general opinion, came to visit him. He felt obliged to them, but with a natural reserve shrunk from "explaining" his conduct to any but his intimate friends; and under this head he numbered only three in India,—Mr. Middleton, Stanton, and Wykham. With the first he was in daily communication; to the other two he wrote at considerable length.

It was curious, even to himself, the especial pains with which he laboured to make himself understood by Wykham; he felt far more sure of being supported by Stanton; but the thing which caused him most anxiety was to know what Wykham would think. So it is that one man influences another, he knows not how; we shrink from the blame, and love the praise of the young harum-scarum fellow; while to that sedate friend, who is held up to us an example, who has a why and a wherefore for every word he utters, we listen altogether unmoved. We feel that the one has with him really a more cogent why and wherefore than the other, though it be unexpressed and even inexpressible by logic. So when Stanton and Wykham's letters came, as they did, by the same post, Oakfield immediately opened the former, being half afraid of the other. It was short, friendly, and, after old Stanton's fashion, contained a piece of not flattering, but extremely sensible, caution. "Lastly," so he concluded his letter, "remember that to defy persecution is one thing, to prolong the defiance for the sake of notoriety is another, and that the first very easily degenerates into the last. I can conceive a man so constituted and so circumstanced that his principal temptation will be a superfluous opposition rather than a timid concession to the world. But do not imagine that

I think your opposition hitherto has been superfluous or artificial; it has, I am sure, been forced upon you; only the danger I allude to is a treacherous one, which it is well to bear in mind. You could not have a truer friend and a better adviser than Middleton; I should say depend upon him, were it not so much better that you should, as I know you do, depend upon yourself. Nevertheless, if I can be of the slightest use to you at your trial, let me know, and I will come over instantly. My own kind regards to Middleton and his sister. I think perhaps, if I did come to Ferozepore, I might fall upon Stafford and slay him; so I am as well away. Let me hear what Wykham says."

"True for you, old fellow," soliloquised Oakfield after reading the above; "I have thought of that rock you mention; but as long as I feel honestly persuaded that I am not fighting my own battle, but truth's, I will go a-head, and not stop short for every fancied danger. And now for Wykham."

Wykham's letter was as follows: —

"My Dear Oakfield,

"I had heard strange stories about you up here, and was glad to get at the truth in your own letter. My first impulse was to lay a dâk, rush down to Ferozepore, and shoot Stafford. On second thoughts, I found that this would be a very imper-

tinent interference with you. On reading your letter, indeed, I find that you put a positive veto upon the shooting plan altogether, so I suppose that hound must get off free. You ask me what I think of your conduct? Now, I tell you candidly that, had any one told me, as an imaginary case, what passed at your mess table that night, I should have said it was impossible for an honourable man to overlook such remarks as those made by Stafford. But when I hear that *you have done so*, my opinion is altered. I know, dear Oakfield, that there is not a more honourable man in India than you, though you always had these queer notions. I have told you often that I cannot quite agree with you as to the opinion of the world. I have all my life been taught to respect and to dread it; you say it is safer to despise than respect it. This independence may be all very well in theory, but surely a man who carries it into practice, and gets universally cut in consequence, will be forced to reconsider it? How on earth are we to live, if any snob may with impunity insult us when and where he likes? Then again as to Straddles; I almost cried with joy at the account of the licking you gave him; but surely if a bigger man were to horsewhip you, you would think it very hard not to have satisfaction. I have always looked upon duelling as the great protection from the dominion of mere bullying and brute force. And yet, as often as I read your letter, I seem to follow you all through, and to think you right; and again, when I consider the business without your letter before me, then I do not see how you *can* be

right. As to want of pluck, I never dreamed of that for a moment; only admired the plucky way in which you (as I candidly acknowledge I dare not do) carry out your principles. I heard one man saying something impertinent about you the other day, and contradicted him so decidedly that I was very near being engaged in a little quarrel on my account. I do not know what I have said; my opinion changes every two minutes; only I am quite certain that whatever you think, you do, and for that I admire you heartily; and I am also quite certain that you have more real courage than I and all the 90th put together; and I honestly believe, though from every association and habit I find it impossible to believe so steadily, that you are right and I am wrong about duelling. Mind, I say this, having just read your letter over again; in five minutes I shall probably think differently; but I never do or shall think differently about you; and if all the 90th round insult you, and you refuse to fight them, I shall be, as I am now, as much as ever, and far more than ever,

"Your affectionate friend,

"Fred. Wykham."

This was more than Oakfield had ventured to expect, and he was greatly pleased. He had now got all the sympathy he expected or wanted; for to his friends at home he maintained a perfect silence on the whole affair; although each mail brought him his letters, as usual, breathing the very

spirit of love, and wisdom, and holy courage, which were better than whole bushels of direct advice from a fountain of more ordinary quality.

On the first of August both he and Stafford received copies of the charges on which they were respectively to be tried by the same court. Stafford, as senior, had precedence, but his case was soon despatched. He pleaded guilty to the charge of unofficer-like conduct in sending a challenge to fight a duel to Ensign Oakfield; but he pleaded provocation, having been dictated to by one so much his junior; urged the laws of honour, the general tone of the service, as making in his favour; and in short threw himself on the mercy of the court.

On the following day, the second of August, the far more exciting trial was to come on, of which we proceed to give a full and accurate report. Mr. Middleton breakfasted with Oakfield the morning of the trial, and drove him over to the artillery mess-house where the court was to meet at 11 o'clock. It was the first time for some weeks that Mr. Middleton had been in cantonments. Several officers spoke to him, studiously avoiding any recognition of Oakfield, but on these terms Mr. Middleton refused to be addressed. In a short time the court was assembled, the members being seated down the two sides of the mess table,

with the President at the head. At a small table, close to the President, sat Oakfield and Mr. Middleton, and also the Judge Advocate, Captain Larkins. The preliminaries were disposed of, and then the charges were read, as follows: —

1. "For conduct highly unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, in suffering himself on the 20th of June, 1847, to be grossly and publicly insulted at the mess table of his regiment, and neither reporting to his commanding officer, nor in any way noticing the affront."

2. "For highly unofficer-like conduct, in having, on the morning of the 21st of June, 1847, assaulted Lieutenant H. Straddles, of the 90th regiment, N. I., and struck him repeatedly with a riding whip."

The prosecutor, Col. Pringle, being called upon, read the following statement: —

"Mr. President and Gentlemen, — when I inform you that I have had the honour to command the 90th regiment for six years, and that this is the first occasion, during that period, on which any officer of the corps has been brought to trial, you may conceive the reluctance and pain with which I come forward now as prosecutor. But how must that pain be increased, when the offence, for which I have been compelled to bring (for the first time) one of the officers under my command

before a Court Martial, is not merely a military crime, not merely a breach of military law or a neglect of military duty, but an offence characterised in the charges by the damning description, 'unbecoming the character'—(not only 'of an officer,' but) 'of a gentleman!' And of all offences, too, that which is most fatal to the combined character of an officer and a gentleman—that offence which it is painful even to name,—cowardice! Had it been a crime of less magnitude, I might—I do not say I would—but I might possibly have considered it within the limit of my duty, to suppress anything which might bring a stain upon the hitherto unsullied reputation of my regiment; but I should be unworthy of that regiment, I should be unworthy of the trust reposed in me, of which I am so justly proud, did I suffer our society to remain contaminated by the undisturbed presence of a coward. I am sorry to use strong language, I am sorry to use expressions which may add to what the prisoner must already suffer, but indeed this is a subject on which any officer, any gentleman, any Englishman, may be excused for becoming somewhat excited. You will hear by the evidence, gentlemen, that Mr. Oakfield was publicly addressed at the mess-table, in the presence of a large company, in language which no gentleman—which no man of spirit or

of honour would brook for an instant. I am not vindicating the officer who made use of such language, but I do say, that the author of an insult, who is ready like a man to make good or to withdraw his words, however greatly to be blamed, has yet more claim upon our sympathies than the person who tamely submits to it. I need not trouble you, gentlemen, with details which will be amply narrated in the course of the evidence; I will only say that the prisoner was addressed as 'a hypocrite and a coward;' I am actually, gentlemen, quoting the exact words used; and from that time to this he has rested quietly under the imputation: nay more, when a brother officer, in a friendly spirit, tried to represent to him the consequence of such conduct, the ignominy and degradation which must inevitably ensue, he still refused to be excited to a sense of duty, and preferred his own ease and personal security to the trouble and possible danger which might attend the vindication of his honour! Gentlemen, I ask you, whether such an officer is worthy to bear a commission in a noble army? to be enrolled among the members of a gallant and honourable regiment? I know that duelling is forbidden by the articles of war: and although, as an individual, I may regret that what appears to me a lamentable concession to the opinions of those little qualified

to judge in such matters, should have been so fatal to a practice once universal amongst gentlemen and men of honour, yet it is not for me, in my capacity of prosecutor, to complain of an officer before a military court for not committing what would be, according to the letter, a military crime. I may think that the spirit of military justice would not, in so flagrant a case, have been transgressed by a breach of the letter: or I may think that a brave soldier would have preferred the risk of military punishment to the certainty of personal dishonour. But leaving this,—the prisoner is not charged, nor is it for me to charge him, with not fighting a duel, but with taking no steps at all to resent a gross and public affront—with resting under it, and by his silence allowing and consenting to it.

"I pass on to the second charge.

"The prisoner is accused, not only of a cowardly indifference to insult, but also of a cowardly assault. There are, I admit, cases where a gentleman may be justified, and even bound, to have recourse to personal chastisement for redress. There are affronts, I say, of such a nature; or an affront may be offered by parties in so inferior a rank in life, that any other mode of obtaining satisfaction is put out of the question. But I appeal to the court whether, in this case, either

the parties, or the circumstances, justified such a course. Lieutenant Straddles is the prisoner's equal by birth, his senior in the service, and, I need not add, in my opinion, his superior in reputation. He was the bearer of a message, — unmilitary, indeed, — but not disgraceful nor ungentlemanly; and if, stung with indignation at the reception he and his message met with, he unfortunately gave utterance to expressions inconsistent with that quiet neutral bearing which the etiquette of his position required, yet was the prisoner, of all people in the world, — the prisoner who, the night before, had submitted to be called a hypocrite and a coward, — was he the man to play the Hector and the bravo in the public road? Or is not his conduct all of a piece, and is not this taking advantage of superior physical power another symptom of that temper which dares to be bold only in the absence of danger? These facts will all be proved by incontestable evidence; and if proved, I cannot conceive that any assembly of officers will view the matter in a different light from what I do myself. I repeat, that if I have used strong language, it is but the expression of the indignation natural (I trust not discreditable) to an old soldier, who grieves that the hitherto unsullied honour of his regiment should be disgraced by the most contemptible of

all vices — cowardice. I have no personal ill-will to the young man who is on his trial; both I and my officers were ready to receive him, as a brother officer should be received, into our friendly and hitherto united society; and although I early perceived and regretted symptoms of a temper not accordant with the high tone which it had been my pride to observe in the regiment, yet I would have indignantly denied, had it been told me three months ago, that he could be deficient in the first quality of a soldier, — courage! I have no personal ill-will to him; I may, indeed, pity and shrink from, but have no reason to dislike him; but I cannot, for an instant, allow his feelings, or the feelings of any individual, to make me forget the duty which I owe to my profession, my regiment, and myself."

The Colonel resumed his seat. His speech was a bad one for the prosecution, favourable to the defence. He had made the common, but very egregious, mistake, of being too savage. Men's sympathies are always with those who are down; the prisoner is almost always an object of compassion, and any unnecessary fierceness, or appearance of undue pressing, on the part of the accuser, increases this feeling. Many who had been abusing Oakfield for the last month, felt for him, as they observed him listening to the above harangue;

sitting, without once changing his position, with his eye fixed on Colonel Pringle, as he read his statement, and his face flushing from time to time at the cruel repetition of the insults it contained. When it was over, he leant back; the flush disappearing left his face very pale; he looked at Mr. Middleton, whose countenance expressed far more visibly the strong indignation he felt, smiled, and shook his head.

The first witness called for the prosecution was Lieutenant Stafford. Being, of course, himself still under arrest, he also appeared without his sword, and took his seat at the same table with Oakfield and the Judge Advocate. All the proceedings of a Court Martial have to be recorded; every question that is put by the prosecutor, or the prisoner, or the court, has to be handed, in writing, to the Judge Advocate, who alone conducts the examination of all witnesses, and is entered by him, together with the answer, in the proceedings. The following questions were put to Stafford, after he had been sworn by the prosecutor:—

"Were you dining at the mess of your regiment on the evening of the 20th of June?"

"I was."

"Was the prisoner also present on that occasion?"

"Yes."

"Do you recollect anything that passed between him and you in the course of that evening?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Relate what passed, to the court."

"I was speaking to Lieutenant Straddles, who sat next me, about a young lady with whom I have the honour to be acquainted, when I was interrupted by Mr. Oakfield, who told me that the lady whom I was speaking of was a friend of his, or something of the sort. I was naturally annoyed at being thus publicly reproved by one so much my junior, and said, that it made no difference to me who were and who were not his friends, or words to that effect. He proceeded to say that I was impertinent or disrespectful, — I forget which; and then I lost my temper, and told him that his interference was uncalled for and insolent, and that I would not be dictated to by one who, for all I knew, might be a hypocrite or a coward."

"Do you remember using those precise words?"

"Yes, distinctly; those very words."

"And what did the prisoner say?"

"He said nothing to me; he addressed a remark to some other officer, — Captain Colt, I think, — appealing for his protection; upon which I told him, that we were not school-boys, and that it was the custom in the 90th for a man to be

ready to fight his own battles, without asking for assistance from other people."

"Did the prisoner still say nothing?"

"Nothing to me; he said something to the same effect again, — I believe to Captain Colt, — and then left the table."

"Was the impression upon your own mind that you had offered an affront to Mr. Oakfield?"

"Yes; certainly."

"Did you expect him to resent it?"

"Of course I did."

"It is your opinion that the language you used was such as no gentleman ought to hear without resenting?"

"That is my decided opinion."

"Did the prisoner, upon any subsequent occasion, demand an apology?"

"I never heard a word from him from that time to this."

The witness was then cross-examined by Oakfield, through the Judge Advocate, in the manner explained above.

"You say that you were speaking to Lieutenant Straddles, who sat next you; did you not speak so as that everybody at the table might have heard you?"

"Very likely I did; I didn't care whether they heard or not."

"Did you not know, before I interfered, that what you were saying was likely to be, in the highest degree, unpleasant and offensive to me?"

"I really don't know that I took the trouble to think about it."

"When I interfered, in the first instance, did I speak civilly or not?"

"Oh, civilly enough."

This was Stafford's evidence.

Lieutenant Perkins was the second witness for the prosecution. He narrated what had occurred, only colouring the whole more favourably for Oakfield and less so for Stafford, but agreeing with the latter's evidence in all essential particulars. He was then asked—

"Did you not go over to Mr. Oakfield's quarters shortly after that officer had left the mess-table?"

"I did."

"Was your impression, when you went over to see Mr. Oakfield, that he had been insulted by Lieutenant Stafford?"

"Certainly, infamously insulted."

"Have you any objection to state what passed between you and Mr. Oakfield that evening?"

"I can't remember half of what passed; we talked for a long time. I know the drift of it was,

that I advised him to challenge Stafford, and he said he wouldn't."

"Did you not suggest that there might be some other mode of resenting the insult that had been offered?"

"No, I don't think I did; I don't see that there was any other."

At this answer the court smiled, and the prosecutor looked foolish.

"Did you not suggest reporting the matter to the commanding officer?" was the next question, but the President, a grey-haired, handsome-looking Colonel of Artillery, disallowed it as a leading question, and as having been in effect already answered. Oakfield proceeded to cross-examine Perkins.

"Do you think I was justified in interrupting Lieutenant Stafford as I did at the mess-table?"

"Decidedly, you were bound to do so."

"Was Lieutenant Stafford's violent language provoked by any incivility in my words or manner?"

"Most certainly not."

"Has not Lieutenant Stafford been long known in the regiment as a professed duellist?"

This question was objected to as doubtful, by the Judge Advocate, and the court was cleared to consider it. Courts Martial are justly and scrupu-

lously jealous of general insinuations as to character, but in this case it was urged by some of the members that the point might really be essential to the defence, as all would admit that a notoriously quarrelsome man might be the object of special treatment; so the question was allowed, and the answer was,—

"I don't know exactly what is meant by 'professed duellist;' he is known to have been out several times."

"Do you not consider him a quarrelsome man?"

"Yes, I do."

"Was not the long and short of your advice to me, when you came over to my quarters, to call Mr. Stafford out?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Do you think that the regiment would have considered my character as being entirely clear, if I had not challenged Mr. Stafford, but reported the matter officially to the commanding officer?"

"Well, I don't think they would."

Re-examined,—"Did you think that the insult offered to the prisoner, was such as a gentleman and man of honour was bound to resent?"

"I confess I did."

One or two more witnesses spoke to the facts that had occurred at the mess-table. The fifth witness for the prosecution was Lieut. Taylor.

"You are Adjutant of the 90th regiment, N. I?"

"I am."

"Were you present at mess on the 20th of June, when there was a fracas between Lieutenant Stafford and Ensign Oakfield?"

"I was."

"Did you consider the latter to be insulted by the former?"

"There could be no doubt about it."

"No doubt, you mean, that he was insulted?"

"Exactly so."

"Did Mr. Oakfield, at any time, make any verbal or written report upon the matter to you for the information of the commanding officer?"

"Never."

Lieutenant Straddles was next called; he entered the court with the sheepish air of a man who has to tell a story against himself. He scowled sullenly at Oakfield, who felt more uncomfortable than he had done at any time during the proceedings; for richly as he knew Straddles had deserved his fate, he could not but pity his present position, having to state publicly that he had been flogged.

"Did you meet Mr. Oakfield on the morning of the 21st June?"

"Yes, of course, I did," said poor Straddles, with a peevishness that excited a titter through the court.

"Please to recall what passed between you on that occasion."

"I went to Mr. Oakfield's house on the morning of the 21st of June, with a message from Lieutenant Stafford."

"What message?" interrupted a member of the court; but Straddles objected to answer this, on the ground that he need not criminate himself, and the excuse was allowed.

"I found him out," he continued, "and was told he was gone down to the civil lines. Lieut. Brooks and I followed him, and overtook him walking: I got off and delivered my message. He refused, in a very insulting manner, to hear it; whereupon I told him that a man who allowed himself to be called a coward at the mess-table ought to speak more civilly or something of that kind; and then I added, that I supposed he was going down to the civil lines for the magistrate's protection,"—and here Straddles came to a dead halt.

"And what followed, Mr. Straddles?" was asked, encouragingly.

Straddles coloured violently, and, as if by a great effort, bolted out with a rapidity which the Judge Advocate, who had to follow him on paper, was obliged constantly to check—

"Why, before I knew what he was about, he

sprang upon me unexpectedly, and I being a shorter man a good deal, and quite unprepared, was not able to keep him off at first; and then he struck me with a very heavy whip, so that before I could recover the first disadvantage I was almost completely stunned; which he perceiving, got on his horse and ran away."

There was something ludicrous in the unctous malice with which, in these last words, Straddles tried to change the complexion of the proceeding.

"Did you report this outrage to your commanding officer?"

"Not till I was called upon to do so by the Adjutant; I should have required a different sort of satisfaction, had I not known, that from such a man as that, there was no chance of getting it. As it was, I demanded an apology."

"Did you obtain one?"

"No; I got no answer at all."

Oakfield would not put poor Straddles to the pain of cross-examination, but the court detained him to answer the following questions:—

"Before Mr. Oakfield struck you, did you not tell him that he had allowed himself to be called a coward?"

"Yes, I did; and it was quite true."

"Did you not also say, that you supposed he was going to seek the magistrate's protection?"

"Yes; so I thought he was."

"That will do, Sir," and poor Straddles went out of court with an uncomfortable impression that, after all, he had not succeeded in making a good story for himself out of the matter.

Lieutenant Brooks was then called. He confirmed Straddles' evidence, but some important facts were elicited from him in cross-examination.

"Did you hear me tell Mr. Straddles that I would receive no message from Mr. Stafford?"

"I heard you say something to that effect."

"Do you remember what he said then?"

"Not exactly."

"Did you observe his attitude while he spoke?"

"Yes."

"Please to describe it."

"He put himself in your way, as though to detain you."

"Upon that, did I not tell him to stand back?"

"I believe you did."

"Did he stand back out of my way upon being told to do so?"

"I don't think he did."

"Did you not consider that what he said to me, and the way in which he said it, were extremely insulting?"

"I fancy he thought you did not mind being insulted."

"My question is, did you not consider that what he said to me, and the way in which he said it, were extremely insulting?"

"Well, I don't know,"— and he hesitated.

"Should you have thought such language insulting if used to yourself?"

"Nobody would ever use such language to me."

"I ask you again, should you consider such language, if addressed to yourself, insulting?"

"Yes, I suppose I should."

"Should you consider Mr. Straddles a very small man?"

"No; — he's a good deal smaller than you, though."

"Should you have thought, before this affair occurred, that there was any very great difference between us in physical strength?"

"I never said there was a very great difference. I dare say Straddles would have had the best of it if he had had a fair start." Brooks' zeal for his friend told in a different way to what he intended.

"How did Mr. Straddles get home?"

"He rode home."

The doctor was examined, and stated that he had been called in to see Lieutenant Straddles, found him very badly bruised, and reported the case to Colonel Pringle; who, being also sworn

as a witness, stated that he had, after hearing the doctor's report, made inquiries into the affair, the result of which was, that he sent the Adjutant to put both Mr. Stafford and Mr. Oakfield under arrest. This was the case for the prosecution. The court now adjourned for tiffin.

At half-past two they met again, when the following witnesses were called for the defence.

Captain Colt was the first witness. After a few preliminary questions, he was asked, "Were you not the senior officer present at mess that evening?"

"I was."

"Did I not address you to this effect,—'Captain Colt, I appeal to you, as senior officer present, whether I am to be thus insulted?'"

"I believe you said something of that kind."

"Did you make any answer?"

"No; I did not wish to interfere."

"Did I not address you a second time, saying, 'Captain Colt, you hear this and allow it?'"

"Yes, you said so; but I wasn't going to make myself a third party in the quarrel."

"Did you not understand that I addresesd you in your official capacity, as the senior officer present?"

"No; I don't think I understood anything of the sort."

Oh, Colt, Colt! Oakfield was rather taken aback by this, and had to recall Perkins.

"Did you not hear me twice address Captain Colt?"

"Yes, we all heard you."

"Did you understand me to be addressing him in his private or official capacity?"

"Official, certainly."

"Was not that the general impression?"

"The universal one, I should think."

"When you came to my quarters and discussed with me the propriety of resenting the insult that had been offered to me, did you leave me, thinking that I was afraid to do so?"

"Well, I really am puzzled what to answer, for I was puzzled then; but on the whole, though heaven knows what induced you to act as you did, yet I declare I thought then, and think still, that it was *not* because you were afraid."

"You think public opinion universally condemns my conduct in the matter of Mr. Stafford?"

"Yes, I think it does."

"And in the case of Mr. Straddles also?"

"No; I think several consider that you were quite right to thrash him. I know *I* do."

In the laugh that followed this concluding hearty announcement Perkins withdrew, and Lieutenant Taylor was recalled and examined on his former oath.

"Did Captain Colt ever report to you officially what passed, on the evening of the 20th June, at the mess-table?"

"No, never."

"Considering that Captain Colt was the senior officer present at mess, and that I twice brought Mr. Stafford's language to his notice, might I not very naturally suppose either that he would interfere at the time, or else immediately report the matter through you to the commanding officer?"

"I think you might very naturally suppose so."

"Had you been the senior officer present, and I had made a similar appeal to you, should you not have interfered in my favour?"

"Undoubtedly I should."

Cross-examined by the court: "You said just now that you were present at the mess-table; did you hear the prisoner make this appeal to Captain Colt?"

"I heard him appeal to Captain Colt twice."

"Did you understand him to be appealing to Captain Colt to interfere officially, as the senior officer present?"

"Certainly I so understood him, and so did everybody else I believe."

The last witness called was Mr. Middleton.

"Do you remember my coming to your house on the morning of the 21st of June?"

"Very well."

"Do you remember my making a statement to you of two occurrences, one of which had taken place the night before, the other that morning?"

"Yes."

"Did you not write down my statement at that time, word for word, as I uttered it?"

"Yes, I did; and here is the paper."

The paper was handed in to the Judge Advocate, read aloud by him, and entered on the proceedings, the hand-writing having been first sworn to. The next question was one which Oakfield put at Mr. Middleton's own earnest desire, —

"Assuming the facts as recorded in the paper just read to be correctly recorded, what is your opinion of my conduct?"

Oakfield coloured as the question was put; the court and spectators looked curious.

Mr. Middleton, turning directly to the President, said slowly, "I consider your conduct to have been throughout not only correct but admirable; nor do I think that any other behaviour, under such circumstances, could have been equally characteristic of a brave and honourable man."

The prosecutor then asked by way of cross-examination: —

"Do you think that such an opinion would be acquiesced in by the majority of the members of your service?"

"I hope so."

"That is no answer. I ask—do yo think so?"

"I think it would be the opinion of all the really honourable men in my service."

Col. Pringle looked immensely disgusted, and so the examination of witnesses was brought to a conclusion.

The court accordingly rose for the day, allowing Oakfield an interval of two days in which to prepare his written defence. The defence is always the most popular part of a trial, so that the room was crowded when the court re-assembled, far more than it had been at the first day's sitting, and it was in the hearing of a large audience, less hostile perhaps than he himself supposed, that Oakfield read the following defence: —

"Mr. President and Gentlemen, — In making my defence, I shall, by your leave, bring to your notice the exact state of the facts as they have been proved to you; and then proceed to make a few more general remarks in vindication of my own conduct. I must premise a few words on subjects not directly connected with the case under trial, and therefore not referred to in the proceedings, but which, nevertheless, are necessary to a full understanding of it. I joined the 90th regiment in March, 1846, now about a year and a quarter ago. I gratefully acknowledge that I was, as

Colonel Pringle has said, kindly received by the officers, nor do I think that they had cause to complain of any coldness or discourtesy on my part. It is true, that from the first I never gave in to the common opinion, that all a man's leisure is at the service of anybody who chooses to intrude upon it, and perhaps lived more alone than was usual in junior officers — more than was, perhaps, altogether pleasing to others. And it is also true, that my intimacy with a friend out of cantonments, and my studies in the native languages, prevented my mixing with my brother officers so much as I should otherwise have done. I could not but perceive, after some months, that I was not much liked in the regiment; and indeed one or two, to whom I hinted as much, candidly admitted the fact, and told me the reason of it. I thereupon tried, as much as in justice to myself, my own pursuits and intimacies, I had a right to try, to remove this impression by mixing more in the society of the regiment, and especially by being more frequently present at the mess-table. But I was often annoyed, and I think most of the officers who now hear me would have been annoyed also, at what appeared to me the unbecoming freedom with which the names of ladies, with some of whom I had the honour to be acquainted, were canvassed. I had not been accustomed to this; nor

could any deference to regimental feeling induce me to be pleased with it. It was not my place to remonstrate, but I had a right to withdraw from what was disagreeable to me. Accordingly, I resumed very nearly my old habits of comparative seclusion, regretting the unpopularity which I knew would attend upon it; but considering that on the whole I was justified in pleasing myself. One effort I made, by a private and friendly remonstrance with one of the officers, but it was eminently unsuccessful; the gentleman in question was offended rather than conciliated; and what had fallen from me in private conversation, got, by repetition, to be considered as an unauthorised public rebuke; than which nothing could have been, I candidly admit, more impertinent, nor, I also affirm, further from my intentions. About this time, that is to say about two months ago, Mr. Stafford rejoined the regiment. I had heard a good deal of this officer, to the effect that he was generally considered, as stated here by one of the witnesses, a quarrelsome man. I was not long in perceiving that he had conceived an unfavourable impression of me; he was, indeed, not very guarded in the way he showed this, but I was determined to quarrel, if possible, with no officer,—certainly not with a notoriously quarrelsome man. It would, I think, be generally admitted by my brother officers.

that for some days I bore much that was irritating, and intended to irritate, with considerable control of temper. Mr. Stafford, observing that I was not disposed to quarrel, selected a point of attack where he knew, and I am glad he did me sufficient honour to know it, I should be susceptible. I shall not repeat the language he made use of on the evening of the 20th of June. Suffice it to say, that he spoke disrespectfully of a lady whom I have the honour to know. What followed has been amply detailed in the evidence. The paper, which was read by Mr. Middleton, contains, to the best of my belief, a most accurate account of what was said on both sides. I candidly admit that I was grossly and flagrantly insuted. I am charged with not having resented this insult. This charge must mean, that I, an officer, allowed the service to be affronted with impunity in my person. This I deny. I did what military duty strictly required; I referred the matter to the senior officer present, upon whom the responsibility of vindicating the honour of the service then rested. I charge him with having evaded this responsibility. Of the military offence, Captain Colt, and not I, is guilty. So far then, I contend, that by the very facts established in evidence, I am entitled to an acquittal. As an officer, I reported the matter to my superior: what he did or did not do, is nothing to me: my

military duty in the matter ended there. But where my technical duty as an officer ended, my real, and far harder duty as a man only commenced. I am prepared to vindicate my conduct on this head also: but, at the same time, I contend I am not bound, in order to procure an acquittal on this charge, to do so. What followed, after I had twice appealed to Captain Colt, was a matter of private, personal, moral conduct, with which military law, as military law now is, has nothing whatever to do. Till a Court Martial takes cognisance of the immoral practices of intemperance, idleness, bad temper, and whatever else is most removed from their present jurisdiction, — till then, my conduct, after military law and etiquette were once satisfied, is strictly a matter not for their but simply my consideration. But, as I have been tried, so will I make my defence, beyond what the letter of the law can require. I say, I am truly glad to have been able to act as I did. I am glad that, when I was grossly and gratuitously insulted, by a notoriously quarrelsome man, I took not the slightest notice of it. I will not go off to prove that I was right in not fighting. Although it has been often implied, during this trial, that duelling is an honourable, though an illegal, practice, yet I shall not treat the court with such disrespect as to vindicate myself to it for not

having done what, by the laws and regulations which it is here sworn to abide by, is declared to be an unmilitary practice, unbecoming an officer. I shall not raise a giant for the satisfaction of slaying it; I am not, I cannot be, charged with not fighting a duel; and therefore I am not called upon to express my contempt and detestation for a practice which is daily falling in the estimation of all except its natural and proper advocates, — fools and cowards. And yet it is hard to know, putting duelling out of the question, what this vague term, 'resenting an insult,' really does mean. You were told by a competent witness that the regimental feeling recognised only one mode of 'resenting;' and you well know what that mode is. But I will waive this point also; I will leave the charge as it is, vague and undefined, and yet in unqualified terms deny it. I was *not* bound to resent the insult offered to me personally. Why not? Simply because, — and this is the only answer an honest and independent man should condescend to give, — because I felt myself that I was not. Why then should I resent it? Is my self-respect one whit diminished by being insulted by a practised insulter? If ten thousand Lieutenant Staffords call me a coward ten thousand times each, am I any the more for all that a coward? But if I let myself be called so, the

world will think I am one really. Again, what then? What if they think me a coward? still, if I am not one, I am not injured. Shall I lose my life in fuming and fretting and vapouring and resenting, that the world, which I know to contain an infinite majority of very foolish persons, may *think* me brave? or in trying to be brave? Please God I will choose the latter plan. I shall be asked whether then I will always let anybody insult me, and go through life the butt of every bully? One man asked me that in a practical and particular manner, and I answered it by flogging him. I now answer more generally, that I will resent where I am injured, and not where I only seem to others to be injured. What is an injury and what is not I will not attempt to define beforehand; still less will I accept another man's or another hundred million of men's definition ready made. I pay no allegiance then to the common opinion of men of honour, even admitting them to be really men of honour?—no, not if my own conscientious opinion is different. But if these 'men of honour' are merely the vulgar herd that follow each other's blind guidance, I say without reserve—no; no allegiance, but contempt simply! This is not the language of presumptuous self-confidence, but simply of honourable self-reliance. Such is my principle; would to God I could always act up to

it! I repeat that I am glad and thankful that, in this particular case, I *did* in some measure act up to it. I have not denied his due to Cæsar; in military matters I have taken it upon me to yield account of my actions to military authorities; but neither will I render to Cæsar what I owe to God. I will not submit for decision to a military or any human tribunal, matter which can be tried only in the soul's court of conscience. I repeat that as to this matter of resenting the insult offered to me, my only defence can be, that I was right not to resent it; the wisest and the bravest and the best man cannot tell, but I only, what it was right for *me* then to do. The man did me no harm, was altogether incapable of doing me harm. What had I to resent? So much on the first charge. On the second the facts are clear and simple. I fully admit having, as is stated in that charge, struck Lieutenant Straddles repeatedly with a riding-whip, and can only refer you to the evidence of what passed between us for my justification.

I trust that the court will not think what I have said forward or presumptuous, unbecoming a junior officer; I believe, honestly, that I have said nothing unbecoming a man, however young, vindicating as, if he is to call his life his own, he must vindicate, and that in terms the most decided and uncompromising, his own independence. Nobody

in this court can have a greater dislike or horror of insubordination to military, or any lawful authority, than I have. I am sure my commanding officer, prosecutor though he be, will bear me witness that since I have been in his regiment he has had no cause to complain of the way in which I have discharged my regimental duty; insubordination to lawful authority is always a contemptible vice; but submission to usurped and unlawful authority is a vice yet more contemptible; and no authority is more usurped and unlawful, none imposes a more degrading and ignominious yoke upon the slaves who yield to it, than Public Opinion, — which is the World, — which is enmity with the one centre of all authority — God."

Such was Oakfield's defence; a startling innovation, it must be owned, upon that style of oratory recommended by precedent, but which was listened to with very considerable attention, though with the most various feelings, by all. Colonel Pringle listened with open disgust; the grey-haired pipeclay President with most serious and compassionate displeasure; Perkins with still increasing bewilderment; Brooks and Co. with contemptuous astonishment; some few members of the court with agreeable surprise, as a spirited relief to the monotony of the proceedings; per-

haps Mr. Middleton alone with admiration and sympathy.

The court was immediately cleared, and when the throng got outside the criticisms burst forth,—"Well, what do you think of that for a defence?" "Back that fellow to preach against old Sawdust any day of the week." "Psalm-singing muff!" "Well, upon my soul, I don't think he's a funk after all." "Deuced rum chap, that's all I know about it." "Safe to be smashed." "Bet you he gets off altogether." "Done." Such were the fragments of discourse that might have been heard among the enlightened denizens of the Ferozepore cantonment, as, first in a huddled mass, and then becoming small by degrees and beautifully less, they dwindled off to their respective tiffins.

END OF VOLUME I.

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